THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS
for Families Affected by Incarceration

Prepared for
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families/Office of Family Assistance

April 2015

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Executive Summary

THE MFS-IP INITIATIVE

The Responsible Fatherhood, Healthy Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and Their Partners (MFS-IP) initiative was established in 2006 by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF). OFA required that grantees serve fathers who were either incarcerated or recently released, as well as their spouses or committed partners. They were required to deliver services to support healthy marriage and were also permitted to provide activities designed to improve parenting and support economic stability.

From 2006 to 2011, the 12[1] MFS-IP sites delivered a variety of family strengthening services, including relationship skills training (provided at all sites), parenting classes, case management, financial literacy education, and child-friendly visitation. Program models implemented by these pioneering grantees varied in their emphasis. Some provided intensive, holistic services to a smaller number of participants, whereas others provided a briefer, skills-building intervention to larger numbers of participants. Some offered services at any time during the father's incarceration, whereas others focused specifically on the post-admission period and/or on the period immediately before and after release.

The MFS-IP initiative represented a groundbreaking effort to recognize and respond to the impact of incarceration on families and the crucial role of family support in reentry success. It brought together practitioners from fields that had not historically collaborated—including corrections, human services, and domestic violence agencies—in support of healthy relationships, positive parenting, and economic stability among families with an incarcerated or reentering parent. This report describes the diverse program models and implementation experiences of the MFS-IP grantees, which help to answer key questions about meeting the needs of families affected by incarceration, including the following:

- Who is served by family strengthening programs?
- How do programs build partnerships across the corrections-human services divide?
- How do programs make family strengthening relevant to justice-involved families?
- What have funded communities sustained after federal funding ends?

[1] Originally, 14 grants were awarded. One site relinquished its funding after the first year and one did not receive continuation funding.

Insights from these pioneering efforts will support the Department of Health and Human Services' continued commitment to identifying effective service delivery approaches for parents and children affected by incarceration.

WHO IS SERVED BY FAMILY STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS?

Justice-involved men and their families were perceived as an important target population for family strengthening services. Grantees and their local collaborators shared the view that supporting healthy parent-child and couple relationships among these men was crucial to successful reentry.

Programs that defined their eligibility criteria as broadly as possible within the constraints of the funding initiative were better able to meet enrollment targets. Grantees with strong enrollment also tended to serve a wider catchment area, including multiple prison facilities or multiple community venues.

Grantees felt that including other family members in services would have allowed them to better serve families. Some program staff felt that the initiative's specific focus on spouses and romantic partners had limited its potential reach. They described the complexity of incarcerated men's family structures and the importance of other family members (such as men's mothers) in supporting them and their children during an incarceration. Organizations that continued to deliver family strengthening services to justice-involved men after the grant period ended often dropped the requirement for a spouse or committed romantic partner's participation in favor of serving more men. Others speculated that including additional family members, such as grandparents or coparents who are no longer romantically involved, could help make the family-based service delivery model relevant to more families (such as those that do not include two parents in a stable romantic relationship).

HOW DO PROGRAMS BUILD PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE CORRECTIONS–HUMAN SERVICES DIVIDE?

Partnerships with state departments of correction and correctional facilities take time to develop, but can thrive when they incorporate correctional systems' perspectives. Solidifying partnership agreements with state correctional partners took longer than expected for most community-based grantees. Framing MFS-IP programming in terms of current state-level correctional initiatives (reducing recidivism, filling gaps in current prison programming, or tailoring programming based on risk level assessments) helped to build buy-in from correctional leadership and facility administrators. For correctional- and non-correctional grantees alike, every aspect of prison-based service delivery had to be negotiated with facility administrators and executed in collaboration with facility line staff. Approval for protocol changes was time-consuming to obtain and disseminate. All grantees invested substantial attention throughout the grant period in maintaining their welcome at the facility level. Partnerships thrived when grantees

emphasized correctional system goals and adhered meticulously to agreed-upon schedules, protocols and approval processes.

Partnerships with community-based agencies were necessary to address families' material needs. Women living in the community during a partner's incarceration, as well as couples navigating a recent reentry into the community, had many pressing material needs. Linking participants to partner agency services (or recruiting couples already receiving services from a partner agency), helped to ensure that basic needs were met so couples could also focus on their family relationships. Many MFS-IP grantees struggled with engaging couples in services after release. Partnerships with job training and placement agencies, housing, child support enforcement, and substance abuse treatment providers proved valuable in this effort. Partnerships tended to be more successful when they predated the MFS-IP grant, were maintained via frequent communication throughout the grant period, or when there was little delay between partnership initiation and partners' first opportunities to serve MFS-IP participants.

Establishing trust and mutual agreement on program approaches to safety was important to successful partnerships with domestic violence agencies. OFA required that grantees demonstrate plans to partner with domestic violence organizations or experts. Many partnerships never took shape because grantees were not able to address domestic violence organizations' concerns about providing relationship-strengthening services to justice-involved couples. Grantees who brought familiarity with the language and values of the domestic violence field, who developed strong interpersonal trust with domestic violence agency staff, and who were willing to prioritize victim safety in every aspect of programming, built these partnerships in spite of initial difficulties. Once service delivery began, lack of referrals from grantees to their domestic violence agency partners commonly prompted partners' doubt regarding how grantees screened for domestic violence risk. Partnerships characterized by early and meaningful mutual investment avoided or withstood these challenges. When domestic violence agency partners began collaborating at the program design stage, they helped grantees to develop comprehensive domestic violence protocols, effectively serve or refer participants at risk, and incorporate safety considerations into their eligibility criteria, screening procedures, and service delivery approaches.

HOW DO PROGRAMS MAKE FAMILY STRENGTHENING RELEVANT TO JUSTICE-INVOLVED FAMILIES?

For many couples, focusing on healthy relationships was more salient than focusing on healthy marriage. Among the couples targeted by MFS-IP programs, relationships were often tenuous and competing time commitments (particularly for women in the community) were overwhelming. Engaging them in marriage-strengthening programming proved a challenge.

Not all couples in the target population found the program's intended focus on supporting healthy marriage to be appealing. To increase their programs' perceived relevance,

grantees used the term "relationship" instead of "marriage," stressed the benefits of program participation to the couple's children (rather than the benefits to their romantic relationship), and suggested that the skills the couple learned would be useful in a variety of interpersonal relationships (e.g., parent-child, coparent, employer-employee) besides the romantic partnership.

Helping families meet their material needs was key to keeping families involved in the program. Holding participants' interest in family strengthening at a time of distress and acute material need was challenging. Successful grantees helped meet participants' tangible needs, such as maintaining contact during incarceration, building parenting skills, and helping men prepare for and find post-release employment. The prospect of help with child support order modification, housing placement, and public benefits applications also resonated with participants.

Programs developed, adapted and delivered curricula tailored for justice-involved couples. Grantees chose or developed relationship and parenting education curricula that were designed for justice-involved families, or made adaptations to curricula designed for the general population. These materials focused on relationship skills that were specifically relevant for incarcerated fathers and their partners, such as letter writing, making good use of in-person visit time, or communicating with children about a father's incarceration. They actively sought input from members of the target population during program design and implementation, and tailored their programs accordingly.

Building genuine connections with participants helped promote program engagement and retention. Staff who showed a personal commitment to the work and who made themselves available to participants outside of formal program activities built better rapport with participants. The involvement of program leaders or staff with relevant life experience or experience working with justice-involved families made a difference. Staff who could share their personal experiences with incarceration or fatherhood, who could genuinely relate to participants, and who fostered strong trust among participants, helped them to build a stronger attachment to the program.

Although programs varied in the timing of services relative to the male partner's incarceration and release, some staff thought services might be more effective if started early in the incarceration. Depending on program design, MFS-IP grantees recruited participants immediately upon the father's prison admission, shortly before release, or shortly after release. Others served families at any point during the incarceration. In hindsight, many staff suggested recruiting families early in the period of incarceration, when relationships were more intact and participants were not consumed with the urgent basic needs that preoccupied them immediately before and after release.

Realistic expectations for women's participation were essential to engagement. Women were more motivated by programs' potential benefits to their children than by the idea of strengthening their romantic relationships. They were better able to fulfill one-time or short-term commitments (such as a weekend seminar), and were often more responsive

to opportunities to participate in activities jointly with their partners than to opportunities to attend parallel women-only activities in the community. Help with child care and transportation was often essential.

Engaging men and couples after release was challenging. Among the grantees that attempted to provide support to couples after release, engaging them in program activities was challenging. Sites that did manage to serve these couples built on a strong rapport developed with both members of the couple during incarceration; offered significant practical assistance with employment, housing and/or child support issues; and often included a focus on faith or character development that appealed to men interested in making a fresh start after release from prison. A few programs avoided the difficulty of retaining couples through the release transition by enrolling participants after release. These programs often recruited from existing groups of released men receiving other services through the grantee agency or an organizational partner.

WHAT HAVE FUNDED COMMUNITIES SUSTAINED AFTER FEDERAL FUNDING ENDS?

Many projects continued offering MFS-IP services, whether or not they received additional federal funding. Many grantees focused their sustainability efforts on the prospect of another federal grant. Five of the 12 agencies did secure funding from OFA for another three years of service delivery through two different responsible fatherhood initiatives that launched the year the MFS-IP initiative ended. Among the other seven grantees, several factors supported the continuation of MFS-IP services without federal funding: 1) a low-intensity, group-based service delivery model that could be scaled down for inexpensive delivery by volunteers or non-grant staff, 2) a mission to serve justice-involved families or a pre-grant history of doing so, or 3) a very strong reputation at all levels within the correctional institutions where they delivered services.

MFS-IP had an enduring influence on prisons and communities. One year after the grants ended, many of the organizational partnerships between corrections- and community-focused agencies had endured, with partners continuing to communicate and collaborate. Community-wide reentry collaboratives that began or were strengthened as a result of the MFS-IP initiative continued to build membership and momentum. Stakeholders also cited increased openness and skill among community-based organizations in serving reentering men and their families. State correctional leadership and correctional staff at the facility level evidenced a new willingness to accommodate family-oriented programming in prisons and greater recognition of the importance of family relationships in reentry.

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SECTION 1 The Responsible Fatherhood, Healthy Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and Their Partners Initiative

In 2006 the Office of Family Assistance[2] funded an initiative designed to support healthy relationships, parenting, and economic stability among incarcerated and reentering fathers and their families. This technical implementation report presents detailed implementation findings from the evaluation of that initiative. A summary of the major policy findings from the national evaluation was published previously (McKay, et al. Five Years Later: Final Implementation Lessons (2013) and is available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/13/MFS-IPImplementation/rpt_mmfsip.html. This section of the technical implementation report provides the context for the initiative and an overview of program activities. It also describes the implementation and impact components of the national evaluation.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The number of individuals in the United States corrections system has increased greatly during the past few decades. At the end of 2009, 2.3 million adults were incarcerated in federal or state prisons or in local jails (Glaze, 2010). The expansion in the number of incarcerated individuals has resulted in an increasing number of families affected by incarceration. Most prisoners are parents, with 2007 estimates indicating that 52% of state and 63% of federal prisoners had one or more minor children (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). The total estimated number of minor children of these parents was 1.7 million. Reflecting gender differences in incarceration, 92% of state and federal prisoners who have minor children are men (Glaze & Maruschak, 2008). In addition to being parents, many prisoners have marital ties or are involved in intimate relationships. The Multi-Site Evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative reported that 75% of incarcerated fathers were either married or in an intimate relationship (Lattimore, Visher, & Steffey, 2008), and available estimates indicate that 23% of state prisoners who are fathers are married (Mumola, 2000). Nationally representative data for men incarcerated in state prisons show that, prior to their incarceration, 44% were either married or had lived with a spouse or

[2] The Office of Family Assistance is a component of the Administration for Children and Families within the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

intimate partner (unpublished analyses conducted in 2014 on the 2004 Survey of Inmates in State and Federal Correctional Facilities data).

Family relationships are at high risk of disruption when family members are incarcerated. Couples face barriers to contact and communication, transformations in family roles, and psychological changes due to incarceration (as reviewed in Herman-Stahl, Kan, & McKay, 2008). These challenges make it difficult to develop and maintain intimacy and commitment within a relationship. Spouses and intimate partners on the outside face serious financial strains, social isolation and stigma, loneliness, and negative emotions such as anger and resentment (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003; Fishman, 1990; McLoyd, 1998). A larger body of research has examined the impact of incarceration on children, finding that children of incarcerated fathers may experience numerous life stressors, including caregiver changes, increased poverty, and involvement with the child welfare system. These stressors have been linked to increased rates of anxiety, depression, learning problems, and aggression (Baunach, 1985; Jose-Kampfner, 1995; Kinner, Alati, Najman, & Williams, 2007; Murray & Farrington, 2005; Murray, Janson, & Farrington, 2007).

Maintaining family relationships is important for reentry success. A growing body of research suggests that the partners and families of incarcerated men are a crucial resource for men's successful reentry into their communities. An analysis of reentering men found that those who were married or in committed cohabiting relationships were half as likely to report using drugs or committing a new crime as those who were uninvolved or in non-committed relationships (Visher, Knight, Chalfin, & Roman, 2009). Analyses also found that the greater the fathers' attachment to their children, the less likely the fathers were to use drugs one year after release (Visher & Courtney, 2007).

Despite the importance of familial ties for prisoners and the many challenges to maintaining family relationships during incarceration and reentry, very little programming has focused on strengthening families affected by incarceration. (This literature is discussed in detail by Herman-Stahl and colleagues in *Incarceration and the Family: A Review of Research and Promising Approaches for Serving Fathers and Families* [2008], available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Incarceration&Family/index.shtml.) The Responsible Fatherhood, Healthy Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and Their Partners (MFS-IP) were specifically designed to meet this need.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE MFS-IP INITIATIVE

On September 30, 2006, the Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance (OFA) announced grant awards to 226 organizations to support healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood. Healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood grants were funded under separate competitive funding opportunities, and within each funding stream, several "priority areas" were established to fund and manage distinct types of activities. Within the responsible fatherhood funding

stream, 12[3] awards were funded under the MFS-IP priority area (responsible fatherhood priority area 5) with funding of up to $500,000 per year for five years. The MFS-IP grants supported services intended to promote or sustain healthy relationships and strengthen families in which one of the parents was incarcerated or otherwise involved with the criminal justice system (e.g., recently released from incarceration or on parole or probation).

1.2.1 Allowable Activities

Across all healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood priority areas, the authorizing legislation for the grants (The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 [P.L. 109-170]) allowed for the development and implementation of projects that supported any of the following three authorized activity areas: healthy marriage, responsible parenting, and economic stability. For the responsible fatherhood grantees, although the primary goal of the initiative was to promote responsible fatherhood in all of its various forms, an essential point was to encourage responsible fatherhood within the context of healthy marriage. For the MFS-IP priority area, healthy marriage and relationship-strengthening activities were a required component, whereas responsible parenting and economic stability activities were optional (for more detail, see Appendix A, Funding Announcement for MFS-IP Initiative).

1.2.2 Target Population

Target populations for responsible fatherhood grants could include one or more of the following groups: married fathers, single or unmarried fathers, cohabitating fathers, young or teenage fathers, and new fathers or fathers-to-be. MFS-IP priority area grantees could focus only on fathers who were currently or very recently under criminal justice supervision. All grantees were required to provide services to all eligible persons, regardless of a potential participant's race, gender, age, disability, or religion.[4]

1.2.3 Additional Requirements

The authorizing legislation for the healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood grantees specified that successful applicants must describe what they would do to ensure that program participation was voluntary and how their programs would address domestic violence. OFA required that grantees collaborate with domestic violence experts or coalitions in the development of their programs. MFS-IP grantees were also required to involve stakeholders from the criminal justice system, as well as diverse community sectors. Finally, all healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood grantees were restricted from using grant funds to support inherently religious activities; grantees were required to take steps to separate their inherently religious activities from the grant-funded services.

Beyond these basic requirements, grantees could design their programs to reflect local needs and operational contexts. No one program model was required for MFS-IP grantees,

[3] Originally, 14 grants were awarded. One site relinquished its award after the first year, and one did not receive continuation funding.

[4] Under the Defense of Marriage Act, which limited recognition of same-sex marriages, grantees were explicitly restricted to serving heterosexual couples.

and, as described throughout this report, the sites varied widely in the program components delivered and service delivery approaches implemented.

1.3 THE MFS-IP EVALUATION

1.3.1 Evaluation Overview

The MFS-IP initiative represented a new opportunity to bring together fields that had not traditionally worked together: corrections and family-strengthening services. Because of this novel approach, OFA and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation jointly funded an evaluation to document the experiences of MFS-IP grantees, as well as the program's impact on incarcerated men and their partners. RTI International was contracted to conduct a national evaluation, which began in October 2006. The evaluation design is discussed in detail by Lindquist and Bir in evaluation brief #1, *Program Overview and Evaluation Summary* (2008), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/rb.shtml.

1.3.2 Evaluation Goals

The overall goals of the national evaluation of MFS-IP were to describe program implementation in all 12 sites and to determine the impact of programming in a smaller subset of sites. The evaluation was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What were the defining characteristics of the grantees and their programs?
2. What lessons could be learned from program implementation?
3. How successful were the programs at achieving the desired outcomes?
4. To what extent did the interventions appear to have had a positive impact?

In addressing these questions, the evaluation includes an implementation study, which is the subject of this report and other reports previously released and available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/. The evaluation also includes an impact study, which is currently under way (see **Section 1.3.4**).

1.3.3 Implementation Study Overview

The implementation study was designed to characterize the funded programs along a variety of dimensions, including program design, contextual factors shaping program development, project structure, target population, service model, interagency collaborations, and challenges. It was intended to identify lessons learned that could be used to guide future programmatic efforts similar in scope. Although findings from the implementation study inform the impact study, the implementation study was designed as a stand-alone component of the evaluation. The primary sources of data for the implementation study were annual interviews with grantee staff and other stakeholders, including program participants and partner agency representatives, and administrative data on program participants and service delivery (submitted by grantees).

The MFS-IP programs were a pioneering effort. There were no tested models for establishing healthy marriage programs in prison. Grantees were not asked to adhere to an

established program model or set of best practices, but to implement a diverse set of approaches that would be evaluable. Strengthening family relationships during incarceration has been seen as a promising avenue for improving both family stability and recidivism outcomes. The MFS-IP programs, funded as a part of the federal healthy marriage initiative, specified certain family-strengthening activities, which were often added to existing programs. As such, the program context and services available differed by grantee. For this reason, the implementation study did not measure fidelity to a single model, but rather focused on documenting the process of implementation and the implementation outcomes with the most relevance for future practitioners and policy makers, including

- delivery of corrections-based services,
- delivery of community-based services,
- enrollment,
- program integrity,
- participant engagement, and
- preparation for sustainability.

1.3.4 Impact Study Overview

The impact study, fielded in five of the 12 sites, was designed to assess the effectiveness of the MFS-IP programming on participant outcomes. These five sites were chosen based on their assessed evaluability, including perceived stability of program model (e.g., no major changes in target population or activities were expected during the remaining funding period), use of a couples-based program model, and adequate enrollment to support a sufficiently powered impact assessment. The impact study is assessing whether delivering family-strengthening programming within the context of correctional settings is effective in fostering healthy relationships, strengthening families, and facilitating successful community reentry. Outcomes will be assessed by comparing treatment and comparison groups of incarcerated fathers and their intimate or coparenting partners. Interviews are conducted at regular intervals, starting at program entry and continuing until 18 months after program entry (with an additional, 34-month interview conducted in the two highest-enrolling sites). The final impact study sample includes approximately 3,318 respondents.

1.4 DATA SOURCES FOR THIS REPORT

This report summarizes implementation experiences among MFS-IP grantees. The report is based on data from all implementation study activities undertaken throughout the evaluation, including site visits, telephone calls with key stakeholders, and the analysis of administrative data from MFS-IP programs.

- **Site visits** were conducted by the evaluation team to each site in years one, two, and four. During the site visits, the team interviewed key stakeholders, observed

programmatic activities, and obtained copies of written program materials. Key stakeholders included the program director, program manager, local evaluator, representatives from partnering agencies, key service delivery staff, and clients who participated in programming.

- **Telephone calls** were held with key stakeholders from each site in year three. The same stakeholders were interviewed and the same semistructured interview guides were used as during the in-person site visits. Telephone calls focusing on sustainability were also conducted with former project directors one year after the grants ended.
- **Administrative data** were submitted by grantees in year three. These data were compiled by each program based on its unique information systems and included demographic characteristics of program participants and data on MFS-IP–funded services received, including type and dosage of services.

The program characteristics presented in this report reflect the final program status achieved by the grantees, as captured during the year four site visits. However, for areas in which substantial evolution happened over time, we highlight this evolution in the report so that the challenges requiring adaptation are evident.

1.5 SECTION SUMMARY

This technical implementation report shares detailed descriptive findings from the Evaluation of the Responsible Fatherhood, Healthy Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and Their Partners (MFS-IP). These grants were designed to support healthy relationships and strengthen families in which the father was incarcerated or otherwise involved with the criminal justice system.

From 2006 to 2011, the 12[5] MFS-IP sites delivered a variety of family-strengthening services, including relationship skills training (provided at all sites), parenting classes, case management, financial literacy education, and child-friendly visitation. Program models implemented by these grantees varied in their emphasis. Some provided intensive, holistic services to a smaller number of participants, whereas others provided a briefer, skills-building intervention to larger numbers of participants. Some offered services at any time during the father's incarceration, whereas others focused specifically on the post-admission period or on the period immediately before and after release. This initiative represented a groundbreaking effort to recognize and respond to the impact of incarceration on families and the crucial role of family support in reentry success. It brought together practitioners from fields that had not historically collaborated—including corrections, human services, and domestic violence agencies—and tested a variety of program models.

The implementation evaluation reported here was designed to characterize the MFS-IP programs along a variety of dimensions—such as delivery of corrections-based services,

[5] Of the 14 sites originally funded by OFA, 12 received funding for the full five-year grant period.

delivery of community-based services, enrollment, program integrity, participant engagement, and preparation for sustainability—with the most relevance for future practitioners and policy makers. Data sources included annual interviews with grantee staff, program participants, and partner agency staff, as well as administrative data on program participation and service delivery submitted by grantees.

The next chapter of this technical implementation report (Section Two) provides detailed information on the grantee agencies and their program designs. Information on partnerships can be found in Section Three; Section Four covers recruitment and participation; Section Five describes program activities as implemented; Section Six identifies key implementation strategies used by grantees; Section Seven explores grantees' plans for sustainability and the legacy of the MFS-IP programs; and Section Eight offers conclusions and lessons from this effort.

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SECTION 2 MFS-IP Grantees and Program Design

Located across the country—from New Hampshire to California and from Minnesota to Texas—the MFS-IP grantees varied in size, type of organization, and in the program designs they implemented. This section of the report describes the MFS-IP grantees and their goals and objectives. Key design characteristics, such as organizational partnerships and service delivery strategies, are also discussed.

2.1 THE MFS-IP GRANTEES

The 12 grantees that received full-term funding under the MFS-IP initiative included both public and private agencies. Among the public agencies were both correctional and human services agencies, and the private agencies included both community- and faith-based organizations. **Table 2-1** lists the grantees by agency type.

Table 2-1. Funded Sites and Type of Grantee Agency

Name	Location	Type
Public		
Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC [IN])	Indianapolis, IN	State correctional agency
New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC)	Trenton, NJ	State correctional agency
Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR)*	Baltimore, MD	State human services agency
Shelby County Division of Correction (Shelby County DOC [TN])	Memphis, TN	County correctional agency
Private		
Centerforce (CA)	San Rafael, CA	Community-based non-profit
Child and Family Services of New Hampshire (CFSNH)	Manchester, NH	Community-based non-profit
Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota (LSSSD)	Sioux Falls, SD	Faith-based non-profit
Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice (MNCCJ)	Minneapolis, MN	Community-based non-profit
Oakland Livingston Human Services Association (OLHSA [MI])	Pontiac, MI	Community-based non-profit
Osborne (NY)	Brooklyn, NY	Community-based non-profit
RIDGE (OH)	Defiance, OH	Faith-based non-profit
Texas Arms of Love, d.b.a. People of Principle (TXPOP)	Odessa, TX	Community-based non-profit

* At the time of the year four site visit, MDDHR was operating two distinct MFS-IP programs through sub-grants to Montgomery County and Adam's House (a health center located in Prince George's County).

For more detail on all funded grantees, see Lindquist & Bir, evaluation brief #1, Program Overview and Evaluation Summary (2008), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/rb.shtml.

"Reaching In" vs. "Reaching Out"

A major distinction among grantee agencies is whether the agency was situated in the correctional institution and positioned to "reach out" into the community or was situated in the community and was positioned to "reach in" to the correctional institutions. Reaching out entailed engaging the partners of prisoners and developing organizational partnerships with community-based organizations. Reaching in entailed delivering programming within correctional settings.

The distinction influenced the challenges faced by programs. Correctional agency grantees generally had easier access to programming space and time, recruitment contact with incarcerated men, clearance for program staff, and corrections data that could be used to make programming decisions for participants (e.g., release dates, transfer plans). However, reaching out was not a requirement for correctional agency grantees, and many did not engage in extensive community outreach efforts.

In contrast, it was necessary for community-based agency grantees to build partnerships with corrections to be able to succeed in reaching into correctional facilities. Although community-based agency grantees generally faced more barriers in delivering their corrections-based program components, their independence from the criminal justice system did provide some important benefits. Because many of the incarcerated men and their partners shared a distrust of correctional staff and the criminal justice system (as discussed further in **Section 4**), community-based agencies were able to leverage their position to help successfully recruit program participants.

2.2 GRANTEE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

For all 12 grantees, MFS-IP funding was viewed as an opportunity to build on previous work. Some grantees had been involved in fatherhood work with corrections populations or with child-friendly visitation efforts in prisons (or both) and viewed MFS-IP programming as a logical extension of this work. Other existing areas on which grantees built their MFS-IP work included substance abuse treatment (NJDOC), reentry efforts (OLHSA [MI]), employment for young fathers (MDDHR), work to address racial disparities and collateral consequences of incarceration (MNCCJ), and delivery of faith-based services (TXPOP and RIDGE [OH]).

The original goals set by the grantees for their MFS-IP programs primarily pertained to improving family functioning for incarcerated fathers and their families (see Funding Announcement for MFS-IP Initiative, Appendix A). Many grantees felt that strengthening family relationships would lead to decreases in recidivism.

To achieve this goal, grantees established a variety of objectives, including improving relationship and parenting knowledge and skills among incarcerated fathers and their partners; increasing the family's economic self-sufficiency (through employment, financial literacy, and educational services); and addressing other needs that were salient for their target populations, such as substance abuse and domestic violence.

2.3 KEY DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

Grantees implemented a variety of program designs. These designs varied by such characteristics as identified partners, target populations, the type of correctional facility in which services were delivered, and the services offered. (The number of participants served was tracked by some grantees in terms of individual participants and by some grantees in terms of couples. The distinctions that appear between "individuals" and "couples" in this table do not reflect whether services were provided to couples jointly or to participants individually. Couples-based and individual service delivery approaches are covered in **Section 5**.)

A summary of key design characteristics for each grantee appears in **Table 2-2** (pages 2-4 through 2-8). The sub-sections that follow describe grantees' organizational partnerships, recruitment and enrollment experiences, program components, service delivery strategies, and planning for sustainability.

Evaluation Perspectives: What Facilitated Successful Community-Based Service Delivery?

Although many grantees planned community-based components to their programs, very few were able to successfully establish them, and even fewer had significant participation in this program component. Among the grantees who offered a community-based component, three factors appeared to be necessary conditions for success:

- **Successful grantees displayed an unwavering commitment from program leadership staff to delivering this component.** Grantees that did not have such staff often dropped their community-based components to focus resources on corrections-based services.
- **Having an infrastructure for community-based service delivery was an essential condition.** Grantees had to have programming space, access to the families to be served in the community, and a staffing structure that allowed for community-based service delivery.
- **For grantees that enrolled former prisoners, having access to an existing cohort of participants from some other program or service was necessary to recruit this population for service delivery.** Grantees that were successful in enrolling this track of participants recruited prospective participants from specific residential facilities or one-stop-service shops designed to serve reentering persons. This strategy proved successful because eligible men who were already receiving services in the same location where the MFS-IP program was to be delivered could be recruited in large groups—similar to recruitment for most corrections-based components. In contrast, putting flyers and posters in various locations or attempting to get referrals from parole officers were not productive strategies.

A final factor influenced the likelihood of successful community-based service delivery, but did not appear to be essential. Having partnerships with community-based agencies helped with both recruitment and the breadth of services that could be offered in the community. Grantees that persisted in developing and maintaining these partnerships had an easier time making their community-based components operational. Strategies for forming effective partnerships with community-based partners are summarized in **Section 3**.

Table 2-2. Summary of Key Design Characteristics for Each Grantee

Lead Agency	Centerforce (CA)	Child and Family Services of New Hampshire (CFSNH)	Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC [IN])	Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota (LSSSD)	Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR)	Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice (MNCCJ)
Program Site	San Rafael, CA	Manchester, NH	Indianapolis, IN	Sioux Falls, SD	Baltimore, MD	Minneapolis, MN
Type of Agency	Community-based non-profit	Community-based non-profit	State correctional agency	Faith-based non-profit	State human services agency	Community-based non-profit
Key Partners	• APPLE FamilyWorks • Men of Valor Academy • Allen Temple Baptist Church • Marin Services for Women	New Hampshire Department of Corrections	None	• SD Department of Corrections • SD Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault • Compass Center • Mountain Plains Evaluation	• Adam's House (Prince George's County) • Montgomery County Department of Human Services • Montgomery County Pre-release Center • Workforce Solutions	• MN Department of Corrections • MN Goodwill/Easter Seals • Kente Circle • Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities
Target Population	• Fathers residing in a program-oriented housing unit • Within 1 year of release • In a committed or coparenting relationship (couples workshops) • Returning to Bay Area (case management)	• Fathers • Completed parenting classes and weekly support groups (video visiting and audiobook creation) • In a committed relationship (relationship education classes)	• Residing in a character/faith-based living unit • In a committed relationship (couples retreats)	• Fathers • Within 2 years of release • In a committed intimate or coparenting relationship (couples retreats)	• Montgomery County • Incarcerated fathers • In a committed intimate or coparenting relationship • Adams House • Formerly incarcerated fathers	• Fathers • 3-6 months until release • In a committed intimate relationship • Partner agreed to participate • Returning to the Twin Cities

(continued)

Table 2-2. Summary of Key Design Characteristics for Each Grantee (continued)

Lead Agency	Centerforce (CA)	Child and Family Services of New Hampshire (CFSNH)	Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC [IN])	Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota (LSSSD)	Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR)	Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice (MNCCJ)
Recruiting Strategies	• Promoted upon arrival at the housing unit targeted • Advertised during quarterly "registration days"	• Word of mouth • Advertisements (bulletin boards, posters, etc.) • Formal process at intake at one facility	• Part of housing unit core curriculum • Unit directors recruited for couples retreats	• Promoted at orientation • Word of mouth • Advertisements	• Montgomery County • Promoted at orientation • Adams House • Referral by courts, probation and parole, local jails and prisons, and community-based programs	• Promoted at orientation • Advertising
Number of Participants	• 69 couples (HM) • 197 individuals (HM and RF)	• 82 couples (HM)284 individuals (HM) • 742 individuals (RF)	• 861 couples (HM) • 3024 individuals (HM and RF)	• 183 couples (HM) • 200 individuals (HM) • 215 individuals (RF)	• 235 individuals (HM) • 177 individuals (RF)	• 194 families (HM and RF) • 306 individuals (HM and RF)
Relationship Education Program Component	Relationship classes for couples	Relationship classes for couples, men only, and partners only	Relationship classes for couples and men only	Relationship classes for couples and men only	Relationship classes for couples	Relationship classes for men only and partners only
Parenting Education Program Component	Parenting classes for men only and partners only	• Parenting classes for men only • Visitation and in-prison contact assistance	Parenting classes for men only	Visitation and in-prison contact assistance	Parenting classes for men only	Parenting classes for men only and partners only

(continued)

Table 2-2. Summary of Key Design Characteristics for Each Grantee (continued)

Lead Agency	Centerforce (CA)	Child and Family Services of New Hampshire (CFSNH)	Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC [IN])	Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota (LSSSD)	Maryland Department of Human Resources (MDDHR)	Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice (MNCCJ)
Other Services Offered	Case management	• Economic stability services • Support groups		Case management Batterer intervention	• Economic stability services • Job skills training and job placement assistance	• Case management Family counseling • Economic stability services • Life skills workshops
Services Sustained One Year Post Grant	Continued related activities at a smaller scale with local funding support	Continued family support activities with funding from state department of corrections and local funding	Continued family support activities with funding from state department of corrections and local funding	Expanded related activities with more focus on post-release and less focus on couples using new OFA funding	Continued related services with county support and increased focus on housing and child support	Continued related activities at a smaller scale with local funding support

(continued)

Table 2-2. Summary of Key Design Characteristics for Each Grantee (continued)

Lead Agency	New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC)	Oakland Livingston Human Services Association (OLHSA [MI])	Osborne (NY)	RIDGE (OH)	Shelby County Division of Correction (Shelby County DOC [TN])	Texas Arms of Love, d. b. a. People of Principal (TXPOP)
Program Site	Trenton, NJ	Pontiac, MI	Brooklyn, NY	Defiance, OH	Memphis, TN	Odessa, TX
Type of Agency	State correctional agency	Community-based non-profit	Community-based non-profit	Faith-based non-profit	County correctional agency	Community-based non-profit
Key Partners	• Bridges to Recovery • Opportunity Reconnect • New Jersey Office of Victim Services	• Common Ground Sanctuary • Michigan Department of Corrections • Oakland County Sheriff's Office • Community Programs, Inc. • HAVEN	• New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision • CONNECT • Usable Knowledge	• Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction • Effective Educational Seminars	• Out for Life • Lifeline to Success • HopeWorks • Salvation Army • Families of Incarcerated Individuals • Literacy Council	• Texas Department of Criminal Justice • Safe Place of the Permian Basin • No More Victims • Stepping Stones • LOOPS • Teen Challenge
Target Population	• Fathers of minor children • In a committed intimate or coparenting relationship • Partner agreed to participate • Had 6-9 months left to serve • Set to be released without community supervision after serving maximum sentence	• Incarcerated fathers • In a long-term committed intimate relationship • Returning to Oakland County • Non-incarcerated fathers • Recent released from a correctional institution • Living in Oakland County • Met relationship criteria above	• Fathers or men serving in a parental role • Completed parenting classes and cognitive behavioral training classes (healthy relationship classes) • In a committed relationship (healthy marriage seminar)	• Fathers • In a verified committed romantic relationship	• In a low-security unit • In a committed romantic relationship • Had 6-12 months left to serve	• Fathers in a marital (including common law) relationship and parenting a child with their partners • Non-incarcerated men on parole or probation who meet the above criteria

(continued)

Table 2-2. Summary of Key Design Characteristics for Each Grantee (continued)

Lead Agency	New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC)	Oakland Livingston Human Services Association (OLHSA [MI])	Osborne (NY)	RIDGE (OH)	Shelby County Division of Correction (Shelby County DOC [TN])	Texas Arms of Love, d. b. a. People of Principal (TXPOP)
Recruiting Strategies	Potentially eligible men identified using administrative database and invited to participate	Potentially eligible men identified by prison staff and invited to attend a recruiting session	Presentations at orientations, release planning group programs, and meetings of inmate organizations	• Presentations delivered periodically by RIDGE staff • Marketed by facility staff	• Promoted at unit orientation • Advertising	• Prison chaplains nominated men for the program • Formerly incarcerated men were referred by parole officers or via advertising in parole offices
Number of Participants	• 278 couples (HM and RF) • 58 fathers (HM and RF)	• 102 couples (HM) • 610 individuals (HM) • 635 individuals (RF)	• 480 individuals (RF) • 1021 individuals (HM)	• 3,058 individuals (HM) • 716 individuals (RF)	• 611 individuals (HM) • 757 individuals (RF)	554 couples (HM)
Relationship Education Program Component	Relationship classes for couples and men only	Relationship classes for couples, men only, and partners only	Relationship classes for couples and men only	Relationship classes for couples	Relationship classes for couples and men only	Relationship classes for couples
Parenting Education Program Component	• Parenting classes for couples • Visitation and in-prison contact assistance	Parenting classes for men only	• Parenting classes for men only • Visitation and in-prison contact assistance	• Parenting classes for men only • Visitation and in-prison contact assistance	• Parenting classes for men only • Visitation and in-prison contact assistance • Family group conferencing	
Other Services Offered	• Economic stability services • Substance abuse treatment	• Family counseling • Case management • Support groups	• Family counseling • Case management	Referrals	• Case management • Economic stability services	Referrals
Services Sustained One Year Post Grant	Expanded related activities with more focus on post-release and less focus on couples using new OFA funding	Continue related fatherhood activities with enhanced focus on economic stability with new OFA funding	Continued family support activities with funding from state department of corrections and local funding	Expanded related activities with more focus on post-release and less focus on couples using new OFA funding	Continued related fatherhood activities with enhanced focus on economic stability with new OFA funding	Could not be reached.

Note. HM, healthy marriage or relationship services; RF, responsible fatherhood services.

For more detail on program designs see McKay and Lindquist, evaluation brief #2, Program Models of MFS-IP Grantees (2008), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/models/rb.shtml.

2.3.1 Organizational Partnerships

The MFS-IP grantees worked with several types of partnering agencies in designing and delivering their programs. Key organizational partners included correctional agencies and facilities, domestic violence agencies, and faith- and community-based organizations. These partnerships are the focus of **Section 3** of the report.

Partnerships with correctional agencies were necessary because all grantees had a corrections-based component. This component primarily included services delivered in state prisons but also included federal prisons, a county prison, a county pre-release center, and a county correctional treatment facility. **Table 2-3** shows the type and number of correctional institutions served by each grantee at the end of year four of program implementation. As shown in that table, all but one program was prison based. Jail and prison populations differ in that jail inmates are incarcerated for a shorter period of time and are more likely to be incarcerated in the county in which the offense was committed. Also shown in the table is the tendency of grantees to serve more than one correctional facility, with a mix of security levels.

Table 2-3. Correctional Settings Among MFS-IP Grantees

Site	Type of Correctional Institution Served
Centerforce (CA)	Single state prison of multilevel security
CFSNH	2 state prisons (1 multilevel security, 1 minimum security)
IDOC (IN)	10 state prisons (1 medium security, 5 low medium security, 2 high medium security, 2 maximum security)
LSSSD	4 state prisons of multilevel security
MDDHR	Single county pre-release center
MNCCJ	6 state prisons of multilevel security
NJDOC	5 state prisons (1 minimum security, 2 multilevel security, 1 medium security, 1 maximum security)
OLHSA (MI)	Single state prison of multilevel security
Osborne (NY)	5 state prisons (3 maximum security, 2 medium security)
RIDGE (OH)	8 state prisons of multi-level security; 1 correctional treatment center; 1 pre-release center
Shelby County DOC (TN)	Single county prison
TXPOP	12+ state prisons of multilevel security; 1 federal prison

Most grantees also developed partnerships with community-based organizations, to enable community-based service delivery. Several grantees delivered services in community-based settings, such as community health centers, residential substance abuse treatment facilities, probation offices, or halfway houses. Grantees' community-based components primarily included services delivered in the community to

- the partners of the incarcerated men,

- men who had enrolled in the programs during their incarceration and been released, and
- formerly incarcerated men who were enrolled in the programs after their release.

Changes in Service Delivery Setting

The settings in which grantees delivered their corrections-based program components evolved throughout the course of program implementation because of many factors:

- ► Prison closings affected at least three grantees, causing one to scale back its programming, one to seek a new host facility, and one to relocate its base program office.
- ► Lower-than-expected enrollment caused several grantees to expand their programs into additional facilities to meet enrollment targets.
- ► Positive word of mouth and correctional administrator interest in the programs resulted in opportunities for some grantees to expand their target facilities well beyond original expectations.

Nearly every grantee ended up shifting its original plans regarding the number and specific facilities targeted by the program. Similarly, almost every grantee dealt with temporary stoppages in recruitment or the delivery of particular services at certain facilities. Other ways in which the correctional context influenced programmatic operations are discussed in **Section 3**.

2.3.2 Recruitment and Participation

In designing their programs, each MFS-IP grantee

- selected its target population,
- established eligibility requirements for participation, and
- developed recruitment strategies to identify and enroll the target population.

Recruitment strategies had to take into account participation barriers and facilitators present in the correctional institution context, as described in the text box, "Service Delivery Setting Among Grantees." In addition, sites' approaches to recruitment and participation of non-incarcerated couple members reflected state-level differences in prison assignment policy. The relative priority given to proximity of a prison facility to an incarcerated person's home community (and typically, family) in making prison residential assignments varied, with men in some states being housed in facilities many hours from the home communities where their partners resided. This affected how far non-incarcerated couple members had to travel to participate in prison-based services and, thus, the types of activities for which partners could be successfully recruited.

Target populations, recruitment procedures, and numbers of participants enrolled by the grantees are discussed in detail in **Section 4**.

2.3.3 Program Components

All MFS-IP grantees delivered a relationship education curriculum as a core program component. In addition, most grantees delivered parenting education courses. Other program components varied widely among the grantees and included

- visitation support to help families maintain contact during incarceration (child-friendly visitation, financial support for visitation, other visitation assistance),
- family group conferencing or family counseling (in person or using videoconferencing),
- case management or other individualized approaches to connect participants with needed services,
- economic stability services (employment assistance, financial literacy classes, general equivalency diploma [GED], or higher education classes),
- support groups,
- substance abuse treatment,
- domestic violence courses or workshops, and
- other group courses or workshops (cognitive behavioral training, life skills, empowerment education).

Evaluation Perspectives: What Facilitated Successful Corrections-Based Service Delivery?

From the perspective of the evaluation team, the underlying factor that appeared to be responsible for successful corrections-based service delivery was having some leverage, or recognized control, regarding corrections-based programming. Because of the nature of MFS-IP programming, successful delivery of corrections-based services was a critical implementation outcome. However, some grantees were clearly more successful than others in obtaining and maintaining consistent access for corrections-based programming during the course of their grants.

For correctional agency grantees, the leverage was based on the fact that the programs were operated by the agencies themselves. Although these grantees still had to overcome facility-level barriers to achieve the desired programming conditions, their right to deliver the programs was not questioned.

A few community-based organizations also had the degree of leverage necessary for immediate and stable access to corrections-based service delivery. For these grantees, their leverage appears to have derived from one of two sources. In some cases, the correctional agency explicitly recognized that the MFS-IP program delivered by the community-based organization fulfilled one of its required (and currently unmet) programming needs. In other cases, the leverage was derived from a long-standing relationship between the grantee and correctional agencies that predated the grant. For these sites, the grant was seen as a joint venture between the correctional department and the grantee organization.

Although the remaining community-based agency grantees without leverage were ultimately able to obtain permission to deliver their programs in certain facilities, the access required a long time to obtain and often appeared precarious throughout program implementation. A detailed discussion of developing and maintaining partnerships with correctional agencies is included in **Section 3**.

Table 2-4 lists the key services offered by each grantee as of year four of its grant. A detailed discussion of key program components delivered by each grantee is included in **Section 5**.

Table 2-4. Key Services Offered by MFS-IP Grantees

Grantee	Key Services Offered
Centerforce (CA)	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education workshops delivered to incarcerated men and their partners and to formerly incarcerated men and their partners, family reunification case management delivered to a subset of incarcerated men and their partners before and after release
CFSNH	Parenting classes (and support groups) delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education seminars delivered to incarcerated men and their partners, employment class delivered to incarcerated men, video visiting for incarcerated men and their children
IDOC (IN)	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education classes delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education seminars delivered to incarcerated men and their partners
LSSSD	Relationship education seminars delivered to incarcerated men and their partners, dads-only relationship education seminars delivered to incarcerated men, case management delivered to incarcerated men and their partners before and after release, video diaries[a] for incarcerated men, domestic violence education delivered to incarcerated men, parenting information and letter-writing supplies delivered to incarcerated men
MDDHR	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men, relationship education classes delivered to incarcerated men and their partners and to formerly incarcerated men, employment classes delivered to incarcerated men, individualized support services available for formerly incarcerated men
MNCCJ	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated men and their partners; relationship education courses delivered to incarcerated men and their partners; case advocacy delivered to incarcerated men and their partners before and after release; marriage and family therapy delivered to incarcerated men and their partners before and after release; employment, financial literacy, and other (empowerment, life skills) workshops available for men and their partners after release
NJDOC	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated men and their partners, relationship education classes delivered to incarcerated men and their partners, case management delivered to incarcerated men and their partners before and after release, domestic violence workshops, addiction treatment, financial skills courses
OLHSA (MI)	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education classes delivered to incarcerated men and their partners and to formerly incarcerated men and their partners, support groups delivered to formerly incarcerated men and their partners, case management available to all participants, family counseling available to all participants
Osborne (NY)	Parenting classes delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education classes delivered to incarcerated men, relationship education seminars delivered to incarcerated men and their partners, cognitive behavioral training delivered to incarcerated men, relationship counseling available to all participants, case management available to all participants
RIDGE (OH)	A series of two relationship education courses delivered to incarcerated men and their partners and two parenting courses delivered to incarcerated men, individualized support services available to men and partners before and after release
Shelby County DOC (TN)	Relationship education classes delivered to incarcerated men and their partners, combined fatherhood and economic stability courses (parenting education, general equivalency diploma instruction, financial literacy, job readiness training, Moral Reconation Therapy) delivered to incarcerated men, case management delivered to men before and after their release, child-friendly visitation, family group conferencing available to all participants
TXPOP	Relationship education seminars delivered to incarcerated men and their partners and to formerly incarcerated men and their partners

[a] "Video diaries" were produced at the prison facility using DVD recording equipment and featured fathers reading a story, singing a song, or reading a letter to their children. They were subject to content restrictions imposed by the MFS-IP program (e.g., no making promises to children regarding things that will happen after release) and were intended to provide children of incarcerated fathers with the on-demand option of seeing and hearing their fathers doing or saying something supportive.

2.3.4 Service Delivery Strategies

In implementing the various MFS-IP program components, grantees identified several essential strategies for effective service delivery. These strategies, which are discussed in **Section 6,** include

- addressing domestic violence through screening, responding to domestic violence risk, providing education, and offering individualized supports;
- adapting curricula to ensure relevance;
- incorporating participants' input;
- staffing for maximum impact; and
- keeping participants engaged in programming.

2.3.5 Sustainability Planning

Sustainability was an important aspect of program design for several MFS-IP grantees. Grantees planned for post-funding service delivery through a number of strategies and these efforts proved successful for several grantees. **Section 7** summarizes grantees' perceptions of their implementation success, their future plans for working with families affected by incarceration, and the extent to which these efforts were realized one year after their MFS-IP funding ended.

2.3.6 Key Design Insights from the MFS-IP Grantees

The final section of the report, **Section 8**, provides key lessons from the implementation study. These lessons focus on defining and fully engaging the target population, developing successful organizational partnerships, and building sustainability and long-term impact. For readers interested in the implications of study findings for implementation science, Appendix B proposes a conceptual framework of MFS-IP program implementation that links program model characteristics, implementation drivers, and implementation processes with the implementation outcomes explored.

2.4 SECTION SUMMARY

The MFS-IP grantees included correctional agencies positioned to "reach out" to the community and community- and faith-based organizations positioned to "reach in" to correctional institutions.

All grantees delivered services to incarcerated fathers and their partners. Sites with more leverage within the correctional institution (such as DOC-run programs) were able to get approval for programming quicker and had more stable access to correctional facilities than other sites.

Most grantees were able to deliver services within prison settings; however, only a few grantees were able to implement a strong community-based component. Community based service delivery strategies included services for partners of incarcerated men, services after

release from prison for men who were enrolled during their incarceration, and services for formerly incarcerated men who had not been previously enrolled.

Characteristics associated with successful community-based service delivery included unwavering commitment to offering community-based services on the part of program leadership, the presence of an existing infrastructure for community-based service delivery that the grantee could tap into, and persistence in developing and maintaining partnerships with community-based service agencies.

SECTION 3 Creating and Maintaining Organizational Partnerships

Most grantees drew on organizational partnerships to deliver MFS-IP services to their participants. The organizations with which each grantee pursued partnerships depended on the grantee's own organizational infrastructure and its programmatic approach. They included

- state departments of correction (for non–correctional agency grantees),
- individual correctional facilities,
- state probation and parole agencies,
- county social service agencies,
- domestic violence agencies, and
- other community- and faith-based organizations.

Because healthy organizational partnerships were essential to service delivery in many sites, overcoming the challenges associated with building and maintaining these partnerships was central to grantees' ability to achieve their program goals.

This section discusses challenges associated with grantees' partnerships with correctional agencies, other justice partners, and community-based organizations, as well as the strategies they developed for meeting them.

3.1 COLLABORATING WITH CORRECTIONAL AGENCIES

3.1.1 Navigating Start-Up and Ongoing Partnership Challenges

MFS-IP grantees encountered a variety of obstacles in delivering family-strengthening services within correctional facilities. These obstacles were discussed with the project staff during site visits in years one, two and four of programmatic funding as well as extensive phone interviewing in funding year three and one year after funding ended. During the year four implementation study site visits, RTI collected additional information about the partnerships required for this work via interviews with program staff and key partners. This section discusses partnerships across the life-span of the project. Findings from the early implementation phase of the projects are summarized in detail by Smiley McDonald,

Herman-Stahl, Lindquist, Bir, and McKay in evaluation brief #3, *Strengthening the Couple and Family Relationships of Fathers Behind Bars: The Promise and Perils of Corrections-Based Programming* (2009), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Corrections-Based/rb.shtml..

Changes in Organizational Partnerships

The types of organizations with which MFS-IP grantees partnered evolved during years one through four of the funding period. The partners still active as of year four represented a cross-section of the organizational types represented upon program start-up, including correctional agencies and facilities, social service agencies, domestic violence agencies, and other community- and faith-based organizations.

Some sites, such as Osborne (NY) and Centerforce (CA), brought on new domestic violence agency partners—yet in other sites, partnerships with such agencies became inactive over the course of the grant. Similarly, some sites added new justice system partners (e.g., TXPOP, RIDGE [OH]), whereas others coped with the loss of justice system partners due to administrative challenges or facility closure (e.g., CFSNH, OLHSA [MI]).

Across several sites, however, one type of partnership had become increasingly active during the funding period: partnerships with organizations delivering employment and economic stability services. For example, MDDHR forged a new partnership with a workforce solutions group and began delivering an employment course, and Shelby County DOC (TN) cultivated additional partnerships with felon-friendly employers.

The following obstacles affected non-correctional grantees' partnerships with correctional agencies during the initial program start-up phase:

- **Gaining full buy-in for the MFS-IP programs from correctional partners took more time than expected.** Because family-strengthening programs involving the partners and children of incarcerated men were novel from the perspective of most correctional agency partners, it took significant time to educate them about program goals and address the rationale for each planned program component.
- **Negotiation with correctional partners regarding access to the grantees' planned target populations consumed much of the first funding year for many grantees.** Grantees were limited by state- and institution-level correctional policies and were not always able to gain access to the pool of prospective participants from which they had hoped to recruit or to all of the facilities in which they had anticipated delivering programming.
- **For prison-based programs, every aspect of service delivery—from staff hiring to the timing and location of every program activity—had to be agreed on in collaboration with the correctional partner.** Even in sites where corrections staff were highly enthusiastic and program staff were highly

knowledgeable about correctional constraints, some aspects of the service delivery plan had to be adapted before programs became operational.

Once programs were operational (in years two through four of their grants), partnerships between grantees and correctional agencies shifted their emphasis. The focus changed from first-level implementation concerns like securing access and approval for program delivery to the fairly minor issues related to ongoing implementation. These included addressing logistical and security concerns that arose in the course of service delivery; responding to changes in staffing, schedule, and policy at the host facilities; and (in many sites) navigating access to additional correctional facilities for recruitment and service delivery purposes. Ongoing implementation brought these partnership challenges:

- **Security considerations remained foremost for correctional administrators and corrections officers.** Some issues that interfered with programming, such as service delivery interruptions due to counts, lockdowns, and transfers, ultimately had to be accepted by grantees because their correctional partners were not able to be flexible on these procedures.
- **Adjustments to increase enrollment or respond to participant feedback required negotiation with the correctional partner.** For example, efforts to offer classes at times that might be easier for participants were balanced against correctional partners' constraints related to the availability of institutional space and correctional officer coverage.
- **Correctional approval processes were cumbersome**. This greatly affected how quickly grantees could carry out service delivery expansions (because of waiting for facility access approval and the initiation of relationships with contacts at the new facilities) or fill staff vacancies (because of waiting for background clearances).

3.1.2 Effects of Economic Recession

The national economic recession that occurred during the funding period affected grantees' partnerships with correctional agencies. Because most grantees delivered services in state prisons, state budget shortfalls had a particularly significant impact on their partnerships.

> *The only things [the correctional partner] is required to do are house them, feed them a certain number of calories, give them medical care, give them an hour in the yard a day, and make sure they don't escape. So when the economy gets bad, they pull back on everything that's not required, and that might affect us.*
>
> *–A program staff member*

First, some state correctional agencies opted to manage budget shortfalls by closing prison facilities. Grantees including OLHSA (MI), LSSSD, and CFSNH faced unexpected changes to their service delivery plans when their correctional partners closed prison facilities in which they had been planning to provide MFS-IP programming. Facility closures took place with less than one year's notice and had a major impact on the grantees' plans.

More commonly, grantees' partnerships with correctional agencies were affected by correctional staffing shortages resulting from the

recession. Reductions in staffing affected officers' availability to support programming. Because all facilities required various degrees of special correctional officer supervision for program activities, staff cuts affected the hours during which courses could be offered. Because fewer correctional staff members were assigned to accomplish the same amount of work, correctional partners were strained to offer some of the other forms of support that programs required. For example, additional duties such as creating and announcing call-outs for program activities; coordinating classroom space and scheduling; and assisting with program recruitment, screening, and referral were all increasingly difficult for correctional partners to provide. For example, two programs experienced enrollment stoppages or drops due to cuts in facility staff who played a role in program recruitment.

Finally, staff at several grantee organizations suggested that the economic recession had diminished the priority given to programming at their partner correctional facilities. For some sites, such as LSSSD and MDDHR, this development strengthened the relationship between the grantees and their correctional partners because the grantees' role in providing (now-scarce) programming became even more valued. However, two grantees noted that the economic recession might influence the sustainability of these partnerships, as public support for programming for incarcerated persons seemed to diminish in tough economic times.

3.1.3 Impact of State Correctional Policy Context

In addition to the economic context, partnerships between grantees and correctional agencies were shaped by other aspects of the context in which they operated, including institutional and policy factors.

State correctional partners' housing assignment policies affected implementation. Staff stated that policies that heavily prioritized men's closeness to their home communities (and therefore families) in making housing assignments were more conducive to strong corrections-community partnerships. These policies fostered an environment in which correctional staff could cultivate strong relationships with agencies in the communities to which their participants were returning, and they made participation in family-strengthening programming easier for the partners and children of incarcerated men by improving geographic proximity.

Program staff and correctional partners also noted that high-level initiatives on the part of partnering correctional agencies heavily influenced the success of MFS-IP programming. For example, community-based grantees at Centerforce (CA), RIDGE (OH), and LSSSD observed that their partnerships with correctional agencies were facilitated by the existence of state-level initiatives with goals that aligned with the MFS-IP program mission (such as reducing recidivism).

3.1.4 Impact of Correctional Facility Context

Many interviewees discussed the influence of correctional staff turnover on their partnerships. Although these staff members were not directly involved in program delivery, they had an important role in creating more or less hospitable contexts for programs. As

Photographs are stock images except where noted.

described above, the support of correctional officers was important to the day-to-day functioning of many programs, so program staff worked to build friendly relationships with officers and educate them about program goals and procedures. Turnover among correctional line staff increased the amount of time required from grantees to build and maintain relationships with their correctional partners. High turnover among correctional officers meant that building and maintaining these relationships required a substantial, ongoing time investment from grantees.

Similarly, turnover at the correctional administrator level placed added demands on grantees' time in some sites. When facility superintendents and wardens changed, program leaders were required to build trust with the new personnel and obtain buy-in from them to continue programming. Turnover in correctional administrators required some grantees to modify established service delivery procedures to comply with the new administration's policies and goals. However, interviewees at RIDGE (OH), Osborne (NY), and LSSSD all noted that turnover among facility leadership occasionally made partnerships easier. In these sites, grantees' state correctional agency partners regularly rotated wardens or superintendents from one facility to another. These situations created an opportunity for grantees to expand service delivery into new facilities with administrative support for the program already in place.

Another aspect of institutional context that affected partnerships between grantees and their correctional partners was average sentence length. Grantees developed service delivery approaches that worked within the length-of-stay constraints of the facilities they targeted. Osborne (NY), which partnered with facilities housing men with long sentences, designed a program focused on strengthening family relationships during incarceration. MDDHR, whose Montgomery County site partnered with a facility that housed people approaching release, tailored its family-strengthening content to focus on the transition from incarceration back into community life.

Corrections-community partnerships were further shaped by differences among correctional partners regarding the role of programming in a correctional environment. Correctional facilities differed widely with regard to the emphasis placed on providing education and treatment opportunities for those incarcerated there. Grantees that partnered with program-rich facilities, such as Centerforce (CA) in its partnership with San Quentin State Prison, benefited from this environment through

- the absence of certain types of security protocols that could discourage participation in programming (e.g., requiring incarcerated men to use earned time off from work to participate in programming, conducting strip searches of all program participants upon movement to corrections);

- the presence of other security protocols that make educational programming easier, such as well-coordinated call-outs (which summon men to programming) and existing procedures for conducting out-counts to avoid interrupting class participation at facility count times;
- an understanding promulgated by the institution's administration that community agencies delivering programming were highly valued partners and that resolving logistical issues that interfered with programming was a high institutional priority; and
- the ready availability of other corrections-based programs to which participants could be referred, such as reentry support and various forms of mental health and substance abuse treatment. Some of these resources were made available to MFS-IP participants based on formal partnerships with the MFS-IP grantee, while others simply represented other available resources offered in the facility.

Grantees that partnered with facilities in which programming was relatively sparse, however, reported several advantages as well, including

- limited competition for the time and attention of the men incarcerated there,
- limited competition for classroom space, and
- better ability to leverage the partnerships developed as part of the MFS-IP program for future opportunities to provide programming in the host facilities.

Still, these grantees noted that partnering with program-sparse facilities sometimes brought the additional challenge of educating staff at all levels about the value of programming and overcoming differences in philosophy regarding punitive compared with supportive approaches.

3.1.5 Strategies for Effective Partnerships with Correctional Agencies

Grantees developed a host of strategies aimed at building effective corrections-community partnerships. Interviewees from those community organizations that built on established, long-term relationships with their correctional partners, such Osborne (NY), Centerforce (CA), and LSSSD, experienced fewer surprise delays in the early implementation phase. These organizations were familiar with their correctional partners' basic operational policies and procedures and designed their programs for basic compatibility with them. Similarly, community organizations that involved their correctional partners beginning in the program design phase (such as OLHSA [MI]) entered program start-up with a basic shared understanding of how program goals could be achieved within the constraints of the correctional partner's security requirements.

Interviewees noted that developing early relationships with the correctional facilities where they hoped to deliver services also provided an opportunity for assessing the facility partners' level of enthusiasm as early in the planning process as possible. Grantees struck a balance between the necessary persistence required in dealing with correctional bureaucracy and an ability to discern when a facility was not a strong candidate for partnership because of lack of real interest in the program.

Recommendations for Partnering With Correctional Agencies

Grantees shared the following recommendations for building effective partnerships with partners in the criminal justice sector:

- Develop advance support and buy-in with staff at all levels of the correctional system.
- Identify the needs of correctional partners.
- Demonstrate the value of the programming in a way that matters to corrections.
- Recognize that more communication is better.
- Strike a balance between being persistent in dealing with correctional bureaucracy and discerning when a facility is not a strong candidate.
- Anticipate challenges and be prepared to offer targeted compromises that minimize facility burden.
- Develop personal relationships by using consistent staff and schedules and using multiple modes of communication.
- Set up standing meetings with correctional administrators.

Whether they drew on prior ties with the correctional partner or not, community organizations quickly learned to identify the needs of their correctional partners. Interviewees reported that their partnerships were strengthened when they were able to pitch the benefits of MFS-IP programs using the vocabulary of their correctional partners' current goals. For example, MNCCJ adapted to changes in its correctional partner's programmatic emphasis to maintain strong support and a high profile for its MFS-IP program. Some used the challenges presented by state budget shortfalls to position themselves as offering programming that could help the partner fulfill its mission by leveraging the resources of an outside funder.

Program staff also described the importance of striking a balance between compliance with correctional partners' requirements and fulfillment of the site's own grant requirements. Interviewees from several organizations, including Osborne (NY), MNCCJ, and Centerforce (CA), explained that strategic flexibility was key in negotiations with correctional partners. This approach required grantees to be familiar with the partner's security requirements and anticipate the challenges that the program would present to the partner (e.g., use of space, use of correctional officer labor, security challenges of bringing visitors into the prison for program activities). Grantees then used this knowledge to offer targeted compromises that would effectively minimize burden while maintaining all essential components of the program model.

Grantees consistently stressed that buy-in at all levels of the partner correctional agency was essential for success. Top-level support was crucial during initial start-up and remained important for collaboratively addressing obstacles that arose throughout implementation. Memos from correctional administrators documenting initial support for the program's work, as well as any modifications to program procedure agreed upon over the course of service delivery, helped gain cooperation from line staff and avoid day-to-day confusion. Standing meetings between correctional administrators and leadership at the grantee organization were a major asset. Top-level relationships remained strong when community agency leaders gave correctional administrators frequent opportunities to raise operational concerns and then promptly addressed them.

I've never met a probation officer who's against anyone doing better. The more [services] we give them, the more it helps them make a case to the parole board and get paroled.

-A program staff member

Personal relationships between grantee staff and correctional line staff (e.g., correctional officers, case managers) were also essential for service delivery. Grantees stated that the most effective ways of maintaining these relationships included

- providing consistent staffing in each facility in which services were delivered so that facility staff came to know a specific person or people on the program staff;
- creating a predictable schedule regarding when program staff were present in each correctional facility so that correctional staff came to expect them and to perceive them as reliable ("always be where you say you will be");
- investing time in informal interactions with correctional staff; and
- using multiple modes of communication, including telephone, e-mail, and administrative memoranda.

I came from corrections and can appreciate where [facility employees] are coming from. I'll compromise. I don't ask things on principle; I ask for what's essential, listen to them, and find the middle ground.

-A program staff member

3.2 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY JUSTICE AGENCIES

In year four, several grantees reported having built partnerships with community justice agencies, such as probation and parole offices and courts. Relationships with community justice agencies focused solely on accessing prospective participants. Grantees such as TXPOP and MDDHR relied on judicial partners and on local probation and parole offices as sources of referrals for their programs. For example, MDDHR's Adam's House site drew on the credibility it built with local judges to drive referrals to its MFS-IP program. Staff reported that judges often referred defendants to participate in 90 days of programming at Adam's House (including MFS-IP services if the client elected to receive them) and then return to the court to provide an update on their progress in the program. It is possible

that in some cases, participation in Adam's House programming may have altered sentencing decisions.

Interviewees from MDDHR's Adam's House site suggested that the most important means of maintaining relationships with judicial partners was to be physically present in the courts on a regular basis. Program staff also kept regular contact with partners in parole and probation and the states' attorney's offices, noting that the strength of these partnerships contributed heavily to high enrollment in the MFS-IP program.

> *Once a week, I'm over at the courthouse. Practically everyone in [county] knows about [grantee program] and they can actually suspend sentences if a client agrees to go to talk with [program] representatives and receive services.*
>
> *–A program staff member*

Another community-based grantee, LSSSD, noted that relationships with community supervision agencies emerged in the later years of the funding period as word of mouth about its MFS-IP program spread. The project director also worked to build more active communication with parole offices, and staff speculated that these relationships could encourage participants to remain engaged with the program after release.

One correctional agency grantee, Shelby County DOC (TN), also reported investing heavily in relationships with partners in judicial and community supervision agencies. Staff at the correctional agency reported that relationships with community justice partners, while largely informal, helped raise awareness about the MFS-IP program, increase referrals, and boost interest in the program among prospective participants. The MFS-IP program's strong reputation encouraged participation because men anticipated that successful completion of it might reflect well on them in the eyes of these community justice agencies.

3.3 WORKING WELL WITH COMMUNITY-BASED AGENCIES

Almost all grantees, regardless of organization type, relied on partnerships with community-based agencies to support their MFS-IP programs. The nature of partner involvement was varied, and included both informal advisory and referral relationships as well as formal subcontracts involving the transfer of funds. While subcontracts tended to have a more deliberate and considered scope of interaction, that did not translate into more successful partnerships, since subcontracting was challenging to grantees and some grantees were embedded in communities in which informal referral was routine.

3.3.1 Initial and Ongoing Partnership Challenges

Grantees contended with several challenges in their partnerships with community-based agencies. Early in these partnerships, obstacles included

- lack of existing relationships with community organizations,
- bureaucratic delays at grantee agencies in executing subcontracts with community partners, and

- lack of community partner experience working with justice-involved men and their families.

Later in the funding period, grantees met a new set of challenges, including

- staff turnover at the partner organization, the grantee organization, or both;
- dormancy of partnerships that were not actively maintained after initial implementation; and
- difficulty linking released men and their families to post-release services.

3.3.2 Impact of the Recession

The economic recession also influenced grantees' partnerships with community organizations. Program staff reported that many of the non-profit organizations and state-funded agencies with whom they partnered or considered partnering experienced funding cuts due to the larger economic environment. Program staff speculated that some community partners were less available because of layoffs and increased burden on remaining personnel. One grantee, MDDHR, noted that the recession increased the need for fatherhood and reentry-related services in the community, driving more referrals to the MFS-IP program via the grantee's community partners.

Staff at many grantee organizations reported that the recession created a more competitive job market for men released from prison. One MDDHR site (Montgomery County), which was based in a relatively well-off county near Washington, DC, reported that the job market was not affected; however, interviewees from NJDOC, MNCCJ, TXPOP, and Centerforce (CA) all reported job shortages in the communities served by their grants. Grantees that partnered with prospective employers in the community in an effort to match released men with jobs—such as Shelby County DOC (TN) and MDDHR—noted particular challenges due to the economy: "Unemployment is high and so we have to go the extra mile to convince them to take some of these guys in."

In this economic environment, grantees without functional partnerships with community organizations that could provide their participants with post-release employment assistance struggled to retain families (particularly after release). In the words of one program leader, "When you're doing family work, folks don't want to listen to you unless you're talking about a job."

3.3.3 Impact of Geographic Context

The geographic context for service delivery also shaped grantees' partnerships with community-based agencies. The location of MFS-IP services relative to the communities in which their participants resided affected grantees' ability to identify prospective partners and to build and maintain relationships with them. Grantees that were based in a central location within the communities to which the majority of their participants returned had an easier time building a strong network of community-based partners. The size of each grantee's service catchment area influenced grantees' partnerships as well: grantees that

served a concentrated geographic area (e.g., MNCCJ, Shelby County DOC [TN], MDDHR, OLHSA [MI]) had an easier time identifying and working with community organizations in that area. These grantees could draw on long-standing relationships with other agencies in this community and focus staff time on maintaining relationships with a well-defined set of organizations in a small geographic area. In addition, they could more readily build a high-profile reputation for their programs within this "home" community.

> *This whole mentality in our larger society of "othering" prisoners, who are 1 in 100 people in this country, is a problem. If we were more aware of the fact that these are people with partners and families who are dealing with real problems, and provided a more diverse view of these people on TV, and increased awareness in the community, families could support each other and not have to hide their experiences.*
>
> *-A program staff member*

In contrast, grantees that served a much larger geographic area shouldered the added work of identifying prospective partners in communities with which they were not already familiar. Grantees with large catchment areas were forced to choose between investing substantial staff time in building and maintaining active relationships with staff from community-based agencies in many regions and taking a resource directory approach. With the latter approach, staff created a list of possible resources for their participants but did not have frequent contact with the organizations in the directory.

Those grantees serving large catchment areas also encountered wide differences in resources among the communities in which they sought to identify partners. Many participants were from urban areas that contained potential partnering agencies that could assist female partners during the incarceration and offer continuity of services after the male partner's release. Program staff struggled somewhat more in serving families in rural, resource-poor areas. This was largely because of a lack of community partners, including program-friendly employers, treatment providers, and housing programs in those locales. In these situations, program staff faced a conflict between encouraging participants to consider relocating to a community where they could be matched with more formal resources and urging their return to a community in which informal resources, such as family ties, were more abundant.

> *We used to tell our Native American releasees, "Your parole plan isn't going to work if you go back to the reservation. You need to go to [urban area]." But they don't have any family there, no contacts, pretty limited [job] skills, and they're not familiar with the environment. They're probably not going to succeed [there]. On the reservation, they might have family and they might not need to work 40 hours in order to survive. But it's a struggle because we're a very rural state and these guys may need a lot of services.*
>
> *-A program stakeholder*

3.3.4 Impact of Other Contextual Factors

A shortage of housing options for released men and their families in many communities motivated MFS-IP grantees to seek community partners that could assist their participants with this need.

Grantees' efforts to help participants access housing, jobs and other services in the community through partnerships with service providers and employers occasionally met with difficulty related to community stigmatization of the MFS-IP target population.

3.3.5 Strategies for Effective Partnerships with Community-Based Agencies

Drawing on their experiences with community partners over the course of the MFS-IP funding period, grantees shared a host of strategies for partnering effectively with these organizations.

> *Spend a year to figure out what's going on in this community before you start the program. The issues are child support, visitation, baby mama drama, etc., everywhere. So those were the entities we linked to, because if you don't have a support system around the program, you're going to fail.*
>
> *-A program stakeholder*

Program leaders suggested that it was essential to begin early in building relationships in the communities served by the program. They suggested that building on prior relationships with community-based agencies increased the odds of successful partnership. This strategy also helped ensure that programs were a strong fit for the needs of the community.

Interviewees from two programs asserted that it was essential to have some experience with another agency before identifying it as a partner. On a related note, several program leaders reflected that it was important to take time to get to know a prospective partner's mission and philosophy before considering them a partner or sharing referrals. It was noted that alignment between the visions of partnering agencies would help ensure a continuity of approach in the services participants received from each organization. One interviewee suggested that "basing partnerships more on mission than on personal relationships between the staff" also helped ensure ongoing operational collaboration even in the case of staff turnover at the partnering organizations.

> *I offer my resources to them, and help to achieve their goals and objectives—so then the individuals receive the benefit of those services and we develop credibility with those organizations. When the county gave us this floor of this building, we gave half to [another agency] without asking them for anything except to see our people… and we asked what we could do to make them successful. So be as selfless as you can be, focus on what you want for the population and where can you find what you need, and don't look for money from anyone else—have your own funding stream. Agencies will put you in the driver's seat and bring resources to you because they start to depend on you.*
>
> *-A program staff member*

As with correctional partners, interviewees stated that identifying and meeting the needs of the partner organization were crucial to success. As one stakeholder summarized, "Make sure the partnership is a two-way street." MFS-IP grantees were able to assist their community-based partner agencies with a range of needs (not directly funded by the OFA grant), including sharing space, equipment, referrals, and information about upcoming funding opportunities.

Interviewees also emphasized the importance of clearly delineating the responsibilities of each partner. RIDGE (OH) and MNCCJ both attributed the health of their partnerships to clear initial roles and a commitment on the part of each partner to "follow through on what you say you're going to do."

Many grantees' relationships with community partners went dormant between the program design and start-up phase (when many agencies identified their partners). Some partnerships also remained dormant after start-up until later in the funding period, when participants began to be released. Organizational partnerships that fell away in year two were often never resurrected, whereas those in which some interpersonal contact had been maintained stayed intact.

Other important lessons shared by grantees for partnerships with community-based agencies included the following:

- **Market the program to the local community** using newsletters, presentations at community events, and frequent sharing of success stories among personal contacts.
- **Participate in or help build reentry coalitions or reentry roundtables** that bring together all organizations in a community (typically at the county level) that serve people released from incarceration.
- **Partner with businesses to cultivate job leads** for participants by educating them about the benefits of hiring persons with felony records (e.g., tax benefits) and the assistance available for mitigating any risks (e.g., government bonding).
- **Partner with housing and employment assistance programs** that can help meet participants' most pressing needs and thereby enable them to continue focusing on family-strengthening work.

Partnerships with Domestic Violence Agencies: Challenges and Solutions

Start-Up Challenges. A number of start-up challenges commonly affected grantees' partnerships with community-based domestic violence agencies. Many MFS-IP grantees partnered with domestic violence agencies for the first time, so partnerships were not built on long-standing personal relationships or mutual familiarity.

Many of the domestic violence agencies approached for partnership had not previously served incarcerated and reentering men and their partners. Domestic violence agency personnel were reportedly concerned about the idea of providing family-strengthening services to this population, and some prospective partnerships never developed at all because this hurdle was not overcome. Some grantees felt that domestic violence agency staff based their opinions about MFS-IP programming on stereotypes about the target population (e.g., "incarcerated men are dangerous").

Operational Challenges. Once programs were operational, two distinct implementation challenges affected grantees' work with domestic violence agencies, depending on the nature of the partnership. Some grantees developed referral-based partnerships with domestic violence agencies, in which the grantee agreed to refer participants or prospective participants to the agency if domestic violence issues were identified. In these types of partnerships, the most common implementation challenge was lack of activity. Most grantees did not screen out any prospective participants as being in need of domestic violence treatment (as described in **Section 6**), and current participants rarely identified themselves to program staff as being in need of domestic violence–related services. Thus, many of these partnerships went dormant after the program planning and start-up phase, and domestic violence agency partners occasionally expressed frustration about the lack of referrals they received or doubt regarding the screening procedures the grantee employed.

Some grantees contracted with domestic violence agency staff for service delivery. These grantees paid their partner agencies to offer guest lectures in prison-based parenting classes, deliver training to MFS-IP program staff, provide batterer intervention classes to incarcerated participants, or a combination of these. In these contract-based partnerships, challenges arose related to partners' lack of infrastructure for corrections-based service delivery and their lack of familiarity with the protocols and constraints associated with providing programming in correctional facilities.

Strategies. Interviews with grantees and partner agency staff elicited two themes for building effective partnerships to serve incarcerated and reentering men and their partners:

- **Grantee staff that brought familiarity with the domestic violence field were better able to navigate these partnerships.** It was important for program staff to be able to speak the language of their partner agencies, understand their perspectives, and build interpersonal trust with domestic violence service providers in the community.
- **Involving domestic violence agency partners during the program planning stage was key to securing their full buy-in and ongoing investment in the program.** Grantees with successful partnerships sought and incorporated the guidance of domestic violence agency partners in every aspect of program approach, including staff training requirements, program eligibility criteria, screening and recruitment procedures, and service delivery protocols.

More information on partnerships with domestic violence agencies and other strategies for addressing domestic violence are discussed in detail by McKay and colleagues in evaluation brief #7, Addressing Domestic Violence in Family Strengthening Programs for Couples Affected by Incarceration (2013), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/13/MFS-IPDomesticViolence/rb_domestic.cfm.

3.4 SECTION SUMMARY

Grantees partnered with a variety of organizations, including correctional agencies and individual facilities, domestic violence agencies, community- and faith-based organizations and external local evaluators.

For non-correctional agency grantees, developing and sustaining positive relationships with correctional agencies was a challenge. Grantees had to adapt to continuously evolving institutional contextual factors and invest a substantial amount of time in partnerships with correctional agencies and facilities targeted for programming.

Even if they did not successfully deliver community-based services, almost all grantees also developed partnerships with community-based agencies to support their MFS-IP programs. Strategies for partnering effectively with these agencies included building on prior relationships, identifying and meeting the needs of the partner organization, and clearly delineating respective roles and responsibilities.

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SECTION 4

Recruitment and Participation

Although all grantees shared the same overarching target population, their specific eligibility criteria varied as a result of programmatic goals or resource allocation decisions. A key consideration was specifying eligibility based on relationship status or parenting status. Furthermore, programmatic considerations guided decisions about whether to focus on a special population within the correctional facilities, defined by time to release, time since release, or participation in other prison-based programs. Resource allocation decisions sometimes led grantees to focus on incarcerated men returning to a particular geographic area, to improve the efficiency of case management and make the most of local partnerships in post-release support. The specific choices made by each grantee in determining their eligible populations are presented in Appendix C. These choices had implications for recruitment strategies and participation, which are also discussed in this chapter.

4.1 TARGET POPULATION

Because the MFS-IP grants were intended to target incarcerated or formerly incarcerated fathers who were in a current committed relationship, these men were the "primary" program participants. They typically were recruited first, and most of the eligibility criteria were applied to them (see Appendix C).[6]

4.1.1 Relationship Status

In most programs, once the man was determined to be eligible for participation, he provided contact information for his intimate partner,[7] who then was offered the option to participate. However, some programs, such as NJDOC and MNCCJ, limited participation to men whose partners also agreed to participate. Finally, some programs offered different components to individual men and men participating with their partners. For example, parenting classes were offered to men and couples retreats were offered to couples only. (This approach sometimes was adopted in response to difficulty recruiting partners for

[6] Some programs did have a mechanism for partners to initiate program participation. For example, MNCCJ posted information about the program in community settings. Interested partners could fill out an application form that initiated the screening process to determine the couple's eligibility.

[7] Only opposite sex partners were eligible to be included because of limits imposed by the Defense of Marriage Act. Intimate partners were not required to be the coparents of the male respondents' children, nor were couples required to have been in a relationship prior to the incarceration in order to be eligible.

participation, as discussed subsequently in this section.) Although most sites relied on the male partner's report of the nature of the relationship, in some sites the female partner had to confirm that the couple was in a committed relationship to be eligible for services.

Changes to Eligibility Criteria

Difficulties meeting enrollment targets led grantees to expand their eligibility criteria in several ways:

- Some grantees ended up allowing men without partners or whose partners could not participate to receive programming. (In these cases, grantees delivered an adapted version of their couples' component [e.g., "dads-only" or "absent partners" courses] or allowed distance learning for partners.)
- Some grantees received permission to allow coparenting couples (who were not romantically involved) to participate in programming.
- A few grantees either dropped prerequisite course requirements or added additional prerequisite courses (from which participants could choose) for the healthy relationship component.
- Some grantees developed Spanish versions of their materials so that they could include Spanish-only speakers.
- One grantee opened up its couples' retreat component to men housed outside the specialized programming unit originally targeted for participation.
- One grantee eliminated its original requirement that men had to have a demonstrated addiction problem to be eligible.

Some grantees requested approval to target coparenting relationships, allowing men who were in non-romantic coparenting relationships to participate in the program. Interviewees suggested that broadening eligibility criteria helped them to meet enrollment targets, and that MFS-IP programming was equally applicable to intimate or coparenting relationships because of the focus on improving communication and conflict resolution skills.

4.1.2 Specialized Populations

Most MFS-IP programs targeted the general pool of incarcerated fathers in the correctional facilities served. However, three programs focused on special correctional populations: "max-out offenders" and residents of special program-oriented living units.

NJDOC restricted its program to "max-out offenders" (i.e., individuals who would serve their entire sentences and be released without supervision), because of the belief that the targeted group was an underserved population that would benefit greatly from the MFS-IP programming. IDOC (IN) and Centerforce (CA) restricted their programs to residents in special program-oriented living units within the focal correctional facilities. Although these decisions were made partly because of logistical considerations, the decision to serve a population that participated in special programming was guided by the grantees' belief that populations with a demonstrated commitment to their own success would benefit most from MFS-IP programming.

Selecting the Point of Intervention

Two sites—MNCCJ and LSSSD—designed their programs such that men would be identified for participation immediately once they entered the prison system. This approach enabled the sites to take advantage of logistical factors that made it easier to market the program and screen men for participation, given that men could be introduced to the program in large groups during intake orientation sessions. MNCCJ's approach was primarily driven by the grantees' belief that the time immediately after intake was a high-risk period for family disruption. However, because of the need to reduce the remaining sentence term limits to accommodate sufficient post-release programming, MNCCJ's strategy shifted in year three to include more active recruitment of men closer to the end of their sentences. The other programs that employed sentence length requirements tended to recruit men close to the end of their sentences as well, whereas programs without sentence length requirements enrolled men at various stages of their incarceration.

4.1.3 Stage of Incarceration or Reentry

Some grantees, including Centerforce (CA), LSSSD, MNCCJ, NJDOC, and Shelby County DOC (TN), imposed a maximum remaining sentence length to ensure that men could receive reentry-specific supports before the end of the grant.

Several of the sites that used sentence length as an eligibility criterion also imposed minimum remaining sentence requirements (e.g., at least six months left to serve). The intent of this restriction was to ensure adequate time for program delivery *before* release.

Grantees who enrolled a track of formerly incarcerated men in programming, including Centerforce (CA), OLHSA (MI), MDDHR (Adam's House), and TXPOP, targeted men who were recently released. For this group, men who were released within the past year or who were on probation or parole were the focus.

4.1.4 Geographic Parameters

Several grantees placed geographic restrictions on program eligibility and only served men who were returning to a defined area. Geographical limitations typically were put into place because of financial and staff constraints with regard to serving reentering men or partners living far from correctional institutions. Grantees generally had stronger community-based resources in specific geographic areas, and counted on these resources for post-release support of MFS-IP participants.

4.1.5 Other Restrictions

Most sites imposed additional restrictions related to sex offenders, domestic violence, legal restrictions to contact with one's partner, or some combination of these. Several sites restricted men from participating if they were convicted of a domestic violence offense or were otherwise identified as having a domestic violence issue. Sites that offered couples-based activities inside a correctional facility excluded couples in which either partner had an active order of protection filed against the other.

However, even without these restrictions in place, the day-to-day decisions of correctional staff may have restricted men with these issues from participating. In several sites, correctional staff conducted additional screening of "paper-eligible" men before finalizing class rosters. As a result of this process, correctional staff may have eliminated men for the above reasons or other considerations, such as behavioral infractions. Facility staff also may have imposed additional constraints on the partners who were able to participate in institutional programming, such as background checks, presence on an approved visitation list, or other factors.

Participant Perspectives: The Importance of Word-of-Mouth Recruitment

Most clients who were interviewed during the year four site visits reported that they either had already recommended the program to others or that they would do so if asked. Some elaborated by giving examples of what they might say, including that the program was one of the best things they did during their incarceration or that it provided them with new insights and information.

4.2 RECRUITMENT APPROACHES

Each site's approach to recruiting its target populations is described in detail in Appendix D. Most grantees employed a combination of efforts to reach out to potentially eligible men and to raise general awareness about their programs.

4.2.1 Recruiting Men in Correctional Settings

Group Presentation

A presentation about the program, delivered in a group setting in the target correctional facilities, was the most common recruitment approach for incarcerated men. For many sites, such presentations were delivered during orientations for men newly entering the correctional system or a particular facility or unit. These presentations tended to be delivered to large groups of men who were not prescreened in any way. However, some sites delivered these presentations to a more targeted audience of men who were selected for potential eligibility. Data-driven approaches to identify eligible men were very uncommon among the MFS-IP grantees because one of the major eligibility criteria—relationship status—was very rarely captured in corrections databases. Therefore, most grantees had to cast wide nets to identify interested men and then screen these men for eligibility.

Recruitment presentations were delivered by correctional staff in some sites and community-based staff in others. Typically, at the conclusion of the presentations, men who were interested in learning more about the program filled out a form that was forwarded to program staff for determining paper eligibility. This step was then followed by individual meetings with eligible men.

Marketing Within Correctional Facilities

Many grantees also raised awareness and interest in their programs by using marketing materials, such as flyers and posters placed throughout the facilities. In some sites, facility staff spread the word about the program or recommended men who they thought would be interested in participating. A few grantees formally involved program graduates in the recruitment process. For example, Osborne (NY) employed men incarcerated at the targeted facilities and who had completed their parenting classes to serve as program clerks; these men supported recruitment, attended and helped out during classes, and assisted with paperwork. Nearly all grantees emphasized the value of positive word of mouth about the program in helping recruit new participants. In addition, some grantees noted that having other incarcerated men see programming taking place—particularly couples-based programming—stimulated interest in the program.

4.2.2 Recruiting Men in Community Settings

Recruitment efforts in non-correctional settings tended to be less systematic because fewer opportunities existed for formal presentations to audiences of recently released men. Recruitment strategies capitalized on the grantees' partnerships. The grantees that partnered with parole or probation offices for recruitment posted flyers and posters in the offices and accepted referrals from parole officers. OLHSA (MI) also recruited formerly incarcerated men living in a residential substance abuse treatment facility through presentations at the facility. MDDHR and Centerforce (CA) received referrals from existing programs or partnering agencies in the community, and MDDHR received referrals from family court judges.

4.2.3 Recruiting Partners

Grantee Perspectives: Varying Partner Recruitment Efforts

Programs varied in the effort undertaken to reach partners. Some programs invested substantial resources in contacting partners (who were often difficult to reach, as described in more detail subsequently in this section), whereas others did not. The programs that did not engage in repeated efforts to contact partners typically made this decision either because they did not experience difficulty meeting enrollment targets or because they did not require participation from partners for the men to be served.

Male participants almost always were recruited for the programs first. Although a few sites had a mechanism for partners of incarcerated men to initiate the application process upon hearing about the program, this occurred very rarely. Most often, the man was recruited for the program and he provided contact information for his primary romantic or coparenting partner. In most programs, men were encouraged to write or call their partners to let them know about the program before program staff made any contact. Program staff typically then called the partners to describe the program and invite them to participate in the components available to partners. A few programs verified the nature of the relationship with the partners before allowing the men to enroll.

In programs that invited partners to attend activities in correctional facilities, partners were required to successfully complete the requirements to enter the facility. This typically included a criminal background check and sometimes an application for placement on the male partner's approved visitation list.

4.3 RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES

4.3.1 Recruiting Men

Most grantees encountered relatively little difficulty recruiting eligible men for their programs. Findings from stakeholder and participant interviews suggested that, among men who were resistant to participating in relationship- and family-strengthening programming, resistance was primarily due to

- not wanting to appear weak in front of others (e.g., admitting they had "relationship problems," exposing themselves to vulnerability when the partner was contacted for participation);
- not wanting to acknowledge their need for or interest in relationship or parenting skills training;
- prioritizing other training needs such as education and employment;
- being suspicious of the program's motivations; and
- having concerns about potential breaches in confidentiality.

Several of these problems continued to be identified by the MFS-IP grantees in year four. In particular, men's concerns about exposing themselves to vulnerability remained salient; one grantee noted that the men often did not want the "reality check" of having their partners decline to participate in couples programming with them. Men's mistrust of "the system," which caused them to want to avoid exposing their partners to contact with the program, also continued to be a recruitment challenge. Finally, grantees noted that the more eligibility criteria they imposed (e.g., relationship status, residence in a certain housing unit, completion of a prerequisite course[8]), the smaller the pool of eligible participants from which they could draw. Recruitment challenges reported by the grantees in years one through three are discussed in more detail by Smiley McDonald and colleagues in evaluation brief #3, Strengthening the Couple and Family Relationships of Fathers Behind Bars: The Promise and Perils of Corrections-Based Programming (2009), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Corrections-Based/rb.shtml.

4.3.2 Recruiting Partners

The MFS-IP grantees experienced many more challenges in recruiting female partners. Grantees faced the four types of barriers to recruiting partners listed below.

[8] The most common prerequisite courses were men-only classes delivered within the correctional facility on topics such as responsible parenting, healthy relationships, or "criminal thinking."

Concerns about the Relationship

Interview findings suggested that women's reluctance to participate in programming generally was due to

- unwillingness to invest more in the relationship with the incarcerated partner;
- extended lack of contact with the incarcerated partner;
- skepticism about the incarcerated partner's ability to change;
- perception that the incarcerated partner, not she, needed such programming because he was "the one with the problem"; and
- perception that the relationship was already positive and that no improvement was needed.

Competing Demands on Partners' Time

Female partners also faced heavy competing demands on their time, which ended up preventing many women from enrolling. These barriers included

- travel time from the partners' homes to the prisons, or to community-based locations where programming was held;
- child care;
- work schedules; and
- security clearance issues.

However, one grantee observed that some partners may have cited logistical barriers when their core reasons for not participating may have been issues in the relationship.

Partners' Other Concerns about Program Participation

Some women also hesitated because they did not see how they would benefit from the program; one grantee noted that some women felt that the services were designed to help their partners rather than them. Another grantee noted that some women declined because they did not want other people involved in their personal lives. Because women did not trust the system, they did not want to be associated with anyone involved with (or giving the appearance of being involved with) the prison. Finally, some women were concerned with being stigmatized in the community for their involvement.

Difficulty Contacting Partners for Recruitment

Once partners were reached to discuss participation, they often cited the challenges described above as reasons for not participating. However, many grantees reported that simply reaching the partners was a major barrier to recruitment because partners experienced considerable residential instability; program staff frequently encountered disconnected telephones and returned mail. As a result, grantees' limited resources for

partner recruitment (particularly in terms of limited staff time for initiating contact with partners) were partially responsible for lower-than-expected enrollment.

More information about the challenges that grantees faced in recruiting female partners during years one through three of their grants is summarized by McKay and colleagues in evaluation brief #4, *Bringing Partners into the Picture: Family-Strengthening Programming for Incarcerated Fathers* (2009), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Partners/rb.shtml.

4.3.3 Overcoming Recruitment Challenges: What Grantees Learned about Effective Recruitment

Grantees implemented several strategies to overcome their recruitment challenges. Their solutions included

- using multiple recruitment methods and opportunities to increase enrollment (including marketing efforts, word of mouth, other popular programs or classes);
- using novel incentives (such as more visitation time, subsidized telephone calls or visits, counting programming toward facility or parole requirements);
- scheduling couples' classes for times and days that accommodated different work schedules;
- distinguishing the program from "the system," if possible;
- using program graduates to recruit potential participants;
- promoting the short- and long-term benefits of the program; and
- emphasizing the benefits of the program for the couple's children.

> *Some of it is fear. Some guys, especially when it comes to being in a group with other inmates, they're scared to admit that they're the fatherly type. They try to be tougher than they really are, and getting in a group situation like that isn't something they're interested in. They care for their kids; they just don't want to show it to a bunch of other guys.*
>
> *-A program staff member*

Several grantees observed that emphasizing the parenting component of the program was very effective for recruitment. These grantees noted that the primary motivation for participation—for both the men and women—was the chance to be better parents (or for the men to be in more frequent contact with their children).

In addition, promoting the "quality time" spent together during couples' programming (e.g., getting to sit together, share a meal, hug) was seen as an effective recruitment tool. Other supports, particularly reimbursement for partners' transportation, child care, and food expenses, were important.

Highly visible programs with comprehensive approaches to recruitment, such as using marketing materials, delivering presentations, and attending reentry fairs, tended to be

more successful. Some grantees noted that when recruiting partners, using multiple means of contact, including face time and telephone and mail contact, was critical. Contacting the partners persistently over an extended period of time was also key. Finally, several grantees noted that, as their programs matured, positive word of mouth about the program among incarcerated men or partners had eliminated some of their earlier recruitment challenges. Potential participants heard positive things about the program and saw other couples spending time together in the courses.

These approaches to addressing recruitment challenges, which were developed relatively early in program implementation, are discussed in more detail in evaluation briefs #3 and #4 (McKay et al., 2009; Smiley McDonald et al., 2009). Additional solutions newly identified in year four included

- using language that resonated with the population (e.g., avoiding terms such as "marriage");
- engaging men first and then supporting them in reaching out to their partners before program staff attempted recruitment with the partners;
- emphasizing that partners' participation did not constitute an advance commitment to remaining in the relationship;
- delivering couples-based programming in a setting that allowed for higher-quality interactions than the prison visitation room;
- keeping the door open for subsequent enrollment by inviting partners to call if they changed their minds;
- trying to make personal connections with prospective participants by involving couples who had been through incarceration to represent the program;
- demonstrating that program staff were genuinely caring and supportive of participants; and
- motivating partners by suggesting that men's participation in programming demonstrated a commitment to change.

4.3.4 Client Perspectives: Motivation for Participating in MFS-IP Programs

During the year four site visits, RTI staff conducted client interviews with male participants at nine sites and female participants at four sites. Participants were interviewed individually and were asked several questions about their motivation for participation as well as potential reasons that someone who was eligible for the program may have chosen not to participate.

Men's Reasons for Participation and Non-Participation

Men most commonly cited the desire to rebuild or maintain family relationships as motivation to participate in MSF-IP programs. Some participants also reported an interest

in developing communication or parenting skills. In the sites that offered special visitation opportunities, participants were attracted to the aspects of the program that allowed them increased quality time with their families. For example, access to child-friendly visitation centers, assistance arranging visitation, and video visiting all were perceived as desirable. Some participants hoped that the classes could help ease the transition from prison to the community and help the relationship survive the time apart. Some participants also noted external motivators to participation, such as credits toward parole, help with child support enforcement issues, and the recommendation of a judge.

> *Because I wrote her and I was telling her about the opportunities that were available, and she went along with it to test me, I think. Being incarcerated more than one time, you tell the same stories a lot: "When I get out I'm gonna change, I'm not going to do this anymore." And I guess she tried it out to put that to the test. This is the first time I've taken the time to do this kind of thing, like counseling. When I was out on the street, she had mentioned to me about counseling, and I think she participated to see if there was any hope left.*
>
> *-A program participant*

When asked why eligible individuals might choose not to participate, men suggested competing work commitments, disciplinary issues, sex offender status, fear, skepticism, shame, or disinterest. Pride and privacy also were commonly cited as reasons for lack of participation. Some participants mentioned the importance of guardedness and image in prison, which might contribute to reluctance to share personal details. Several participants mentioned an aversion to classes, structure, and homework. Others had a sense that they already knew how to raise their children. Finally, participants speculated that a lack of knowledge about the program's existence or content may have limited participation. One participant suggested that better advertising could have helped programs with recruitment, and several mentioned the need to advertise that the programs were not just about fatherhood or just about relationships.

Partners' Reasons for Participation and Non-participation

Both men and women interviewees reflected on women's reasons for participation and non-participation. Women mentioned the wish to support their partners as a main reason for participation. Other reasons included an interest in learning relationship skills and a desire for increased support for their children. Another major incentive for many women was the opportunity to spend time with their partners. Male respondents also felt that their partners enrolled because of concern for their shared children and because of personal communications from them encouraging them to enroll.

Logistics, such as transportation, child care, and work schedules, were cited by female interviewees as potential reasons for non-participation. Some women commented that committing a whole day (for those programs offered in a one-day or weekend retreat format) was challenging. Finally, it was noted that women's enrollment was contingent on the circumstances of the relationship and their desire to continue it.

4.4 TOTAL PARTICIPATION NUMBERS

Each grantee made choices about which population to target, how to operationalize eligibility criteria, and what recruitment strategies to implement. The results of these decisions can be seen in the numbers of participants that each site successfully recruited (see **Table 4-1**).

Table 4-1. Participant Numbers by Year

Grantee	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Years 1-5 Cumulative
Centerforce (CA)	40 individuals (HM & RF)	21 partners (HM) 63 fathers and 11 couples (RF)	27 couples (HM) 58 fathers (RF)	44 couples (HM) 92 fathers (RF)	69 couples (HM) 197 individuals (HM & RF)
CFSNH	51 individuals (HM) 90 fathers (RF)	66 individuals (HM) 190 fathers (RF)	125 individuals (24 couples, 75 inmates, 2 couples) (HM) 162 fathers (RF)	148 individuals (HM) 172 fathers (RF)	82 couples (HM) 284 individuals (HM) 742 individuals (RF)
IDOC (IN)	53 couples (HM) 453 fathers (RF)	335 couples (HM) 1037 fathers (HM & RF)	248 couples (HM) 499 fathers (HM & RF)	262 couples (HM) 420 fathers (HM & RF)	861 couples (HM) 3024 individuals (HM & RF)
LSSSD	24 individuals (HM)	13 individuals, 46 couples (HM)	78 couples (HM) 69 fathers (RF)	21 couples, 62 fathers 103 fathers (HM & RF)	183 couples (HM) 200 individuals (HM) 215 individuals (RF)
MDDHR	12 couples (HM) 7 fathers (RF)	50 fathers, 26 mothers, 29 couples (HM) 50 fathers, 26 mothers (RF)	95 individuals (HM) 49 fathers (RF)	68 individuals (HM) 57 fathers (RF)	235 individuals (HM) 177 individuals (RF)
MNCCJ	44 individuals (HM) 258 fathers and partners (RF)	29 individuals (HM) 103 fathers (RF)	48 individuals (HM) 120 individuals (RF)	34 individuals (HM) 211 individuals (RF)	194 families (HM & RF) 306 individuals (HM & RF)
NJDOC	None	37 fathers, 12 couples (HM & RF)	66 fathers, 34 partners (HM & RF)	109 couples (HM) 39 fathers (RF)	278 couples (HM & RF) 58 fathers (HM & RF)
OLHSA (MI)	100 individuals (HM & RF)	248 fathers (HM & RF) 65 mothers, 2 couples (HM) 72 mothers (RF)	52 couples, 99 fathers (HM) 106 fathers, 52 mothers (RF)	80 couples (HM) 70 fathers (RF)	102 couples (HM) 610 individuals (HM) 635 individuals (RF)
Osborne (NY)	3 couples (HM) 15 fathers (RF)	96 fathers, 39 couples (HM) 225 fathers (RF)	114 fathers, 42 partners (HM) 164 fathers (RF)	51 female partners (HM) 161 fathers (RF)	480 individuals (RF) 1021 individuals (HM)

(continued)

Table 4-1. Participant Numbers by Year (continued)

Grantee	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Years 1-5 Cumulative
RIDGE (OH)	36 fathers, 14 mothers (HM)	742 couples, 742 fathers (HM) 154 fathers, 2 mothers (RF)	299 fathers, 294 couples (HM) 324 fathers (RF)	481 fathers, 92 couples (HM) 279 fathers (RF)	3,058 individuals (HM) 716 individuals (RF)
Shelby County DOC (TN)	10 couples (HM) 44 fathers (RF)	75 couples (HM) 160 fathers (RF)	82 couples, 32 singles (HM) 185 fathers (RF)	111 couples (HM) 228 fathers (RF)	611 individuals (HM) 757 individuals (RF)
TXPOP	None	66 couples (HM)	86 couples (HM)	186 couples (HM)	554 couples (HM)

Note. HM, healthy marriage or relationship services; RF, responsible fatherhood services.

Source: Grantee semiannual progress reports. Because of OFA reporting requirements, the numbers of people served as couples and individuals, as well as with HM and RF services may be counted in each relevant category. This means that the numbers do not represent unique individuals.

Although it is difficult to compare enrollment across or even within sites, due to the different units grantees reported, it is evident that many grantees struggled with enrollment in the early years of their programs. By year four, several sites met or closely approached their stated enrollment goals. As evidenced in the table, more participants in almost all sites received activities related to responsible fatherhood than activities related to healthy marriage or relationship education.

Basic demographic data about the participants enrolled in each site is presented in Appendix E.

Evaluation Perspectives: What Made Successful Enrollment Possible?

Sufficient enrollment is a key implementation outcome for any program. As discussed throughout this section, many grantees struggled with enrollment and did not successfully recruit their targeted numbers of families. The grantees who successfully enrolled large numbers of participants or met their enrollment targets shared several characteristics:

- **Grantees that brought a deep understanding of the needs of the target population and offered a program that met those needs (often based on prior experience serving a similar population) were generally able to attract participants.** In some sites, program offerings that resonated with prospective participants, such as opportunities for assisted visitation or intensive reentry assistance not otherwise available, appeared to be responsible for enrollment success. In other sites, offering tangible incentives for participation, such as time spent with one's partner during joint participation, programming credits for participation, or financial assistance for children, appeared to be effective in recruiting participants. In both types of sites, prospective participants had a strong, acknowledged need for the services offered by the program.

- **Requiring a modest time commitment from partners (rather than intensive involvement over a long period of time) appeared to be associated with fewer recruitment challenges.** Indeed, some of the programs that served the largest numbers of participants either did not require partners to participate at all or only required participation in a single weekend retreat.
- **"Casting a wide net" in terms of the families and prisons targeted appeared to result in higher enrollment, regardless of other program characteristics.** Programs that used restrictive eligibility criteria or participation in prerequisite classes often ended up with a very small pool of prospective participants with enough time left in their sentences to participate. Grantees who targeted a single facility not only faced a smaller pool of prospective participants but were also more heavily affected by modifications or delays in recruitment based on contextual changes in the host institution. Sites that recruited participants from multiple facilities still faced recruitment challenges at each facility and only enrolled a small number of participants at a given facility, but the overall enrollment benefit to this approach was substantial.
- **Marketing appears to have been instrumental for several programs.** The use of highly dynamic program representatives, positive word of mouth about the program, and a strong reputation of the grantee organization appear to have been key factors responsible for enrollment success in several programs. Grantees who delivered well-received classes or services prior to the MFS-IP grant benefited from their established reputations as soon as they began recruiting for MFS-IP services. For other grantees, it took time to develop a respected organizational reputation and positive word of mouth about the program, but the return on this investment eventually paid off in increased enrollment.

4.5 SECTION SUMMARY

Each grantee identified its target population, with most sites targeting fathers in romantic relationships and a few including men who were in non-romantic coparenting relationships. Besides parental and relationship status, few additional eligibility criteria were used. Some grantees targeted specialized populations of incarcerated men (such as those living in a program-oriented housing unit), incarcerated men with a particular sentence length or release date, or those returning to a specific geographical area.

Many grantees struggled with enrollment, particularly enrollment of partners and formerly incarcerated men living in the community. The grantees used several strategies to overcome recruitment challenges and became more effective over time, particularly as positive word of mouth communications increased. Characteristics associated with successful enrollment identified by the evaluation team included offering services that met high-priority needs for the target population, requiring a modest time commitment from partners, having sufficiently broad catchment area and eligibility criteria to allow access to

large numbers of eligible couples, marketing the program effectively, and providing ample incentives for participation.

SECTION 5 MFS-IP Program Components

This section describes in detail each program component offered among the MFS-IP grantees. All programs delivered corrections-based relationship education to both partners, almost all delivered corrections-based parenting education to one or both partners, and most also delivered some form of case management (though intensity of case management varied widely). With the exception of relationship education, which was a required program component, the grantees had flexibility to customize their programs according to the needs of their target populations and the resources available to them.

Table 5-1 lists the program components offered by each grantee at of the end of year four of their grants. Services are classified according to their availability to various target populations, including

- services delivered to incarcerated men,
- services delivered to partners of incarcerated men,
- post-release services delivered to men who were released during their program participation,
- post-release services delivered to partners of men who were released during their program participation,
- services delivered to formerly incarcerated men (enrolled after release), and
- services delivered to partners of formerly incarcerated men.

5.1 RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

All grantees provided relationship education classes to program participants. However, grantees varied in the service delivery format for their relationship education classes and the specific curriculum used. MFS-IP grantee approaches to relationship education are discussed in detail by Lindquist, McKay, and Bir in evaluation brief #6, *Strategies for Building Healthy Relationship Skills Among Couples Affected by Incarceration* (2012), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/RelationshipSkills/rb.shtml.

Table 5-1. Program Components Offered Through MFS-IP Funding, by Grantee: Year Four

Program Components	Centerforce (CA)	CFSNH	IDOC (IN)	LSSSD	MDDHR	MNCCJ	NJDOC	OLHSA (MI)	Osborne (NY)	RIDGE (OH)	Shelby County DOC (TN)	TXPOP
Services for Incarcerated Men												
Relationship class (couples)	□	□	□	□	□		□		□	□	□	□
Relationship class (men only)		□	□	□		□	□	□	□		□	
Parenting class (couples)							□					
Parenting class (men only)	□	□	□		□	□		□	□	□	□	
Visitation/in-prison contact assistance		□		□			□		□	□	□	
Family group conferencing											□	
Family counseling						□		□	□			
Case management	□			□		□	□	□	□		□	
Other individualized supports					□					□		
Economic stability		□			□		□				□	
Support groups		□										
Domestic violence education				□	□		□					
Substance abuse treatment							□					
Cognitive behavioral training									□		□	
Services for Partners of Incarcerated Men												
Relationship class (couples)	□	□	□	□	□		□		□	□	□	□
Relationship class (partners only)		□				□		□				
Parenting class (couples)							□					
Parenting class (partners only)	□					□						
Family group conferencing											□	
Family counseling						□		□	□			
Case management	□			□		□	□	□	□		□	
Other individualized supports										□		
Economic stability												
Support groups												
Domestic violence education							□					
Post-release Services for Released Men												
Relationship class (couples)				□				□				
Relationship class (men only)						□						
Family counseling						□		□				
Case management	□			□		□	□	□				
Other individualized supports										□		
Economic stability		□				□						
Life skills workshops						□						
Empowerment workshops						□						
Services for Partners of Released Men												
Relationship class (couples)				□				□				
Family counseling						□		□				
Case management	□			□		□	□	□				
Other individualized supports										□		
Economic stability						□						

(continued)

Table 5-1. Program Components Offered Through MFS-IP Funding, by Grantee: Year Four (continued)

Program Components	Centerforce (CA)	CFSNH	IDOC (IN)	LSSSD	MDDHR	MNCCJ	NJDOC	OLHSA (MI)	Osborne (NY)	RIDGE (OH)	Shelby County DOC (TN)	TXPOP
Services for Formerly Incarcerated Men												
Relationship class (couples)	□							□				□
Parenting class (couples)												
Parenting class (men only)					□							
Family counseling								□				
Case management								□				
Other individualized supports					□							
Support groups								□				
Services for Partners of Formerly Incarcerated Men												
Relationship class (couples)	□							□				□
Parenting class (couples)												
Family counseling								□				
Case management								□				
Support groups								□				

Grantee and Participant Perspectives: What Relationship Class Topics Were Most Engaging?

During the year four site visits, both staff and clients were asked about the topics covered in healthy relationship classes that were most engaging for participants. Communication and listening skills, such as the speaker-listener technique, were popular according to both staff and participants. In addition, participants particularly enjoyed learning through hands-on activities, such as determining one another's personality types and discussing differences in communication based on personality type.

Other topics that staff believed resonated with participants included

- ► understanding preferences for the expression of love (*The 5 Love Languages*),
- ► understanding relationships (especially being attracted to the "wrong" person),
- ► deciding on or sliding into a relationship,
- ► uncovering hidden issues in relationships,
- ► sharing expectations,
- ► forgiving the partner,
- ► dealing with sensuality and sexuality, and
- ► understanding personality types.

5.1.1 Relationship Education Course Format

Relationship Education for Incarcerated Men and Their Partners

Most grantees offered couples-based programming for their relationship education classes. Couples programming was originally designed with the expectation that women in the community would go to correctional facilities to attend class alongside their incarcerated partners. Extensive logistical arrangements were required to bring women into the correctional facilities, including both the partners' travel and scheduling challenges as well as the facility clearance and supervision time required.

Relationship Class Observations

During year four site visits, RTI teams observed 10 relationship education classes. Classes were taught in both prison and community settings, with some programs including partners, others exclusively for men, and one for women only. Half of the classes were structured as all-day workshops or weekend retreats.

The topics discussed during the observed relationship classes included

- commitment,
- communication danger signs,
- decision making,
- stress styles,
- speaker-listener technique,
- dimensions of love,
- personalities, and
- problem solving.

All of the classes included a lecture component, a large majority included discussion among participants, and some included role-playing, audiovisual aids, or both. Observer ratings of participation and engagement among participants found high levels of verbal engagement. In three classes, 100% of participants engaged verbally in the course (with verbal engagement defined as making a statement or asking a question at some point in the class). In four classes, 70–80% of participants engaged verbally. In three classes, 50% or fewer were verbally engaged.

As a result, most grantees delivered couples-based programming in a single weekend retreat. In these sites, the partners' transportation, lodging, meals, or some combination of these were typically coordinated by program staff and the costs subsidized. Typically, the partners stayed at a hotel near the facility and were transported to the facility for one or two full days of programming.

Some grantees delivered joint programming to couples in correctional settings in a traditional course format. In these sites, women came to correctional facilities once or twice a week to participate in a 10- to 12-week course with their incarcerated partners. This approach had the theoretical advantage of spreading out the course material over a longer period of time, allowing participants to better digest the material and practice the skills learned. Yet, because many programs experienced challenges with partners' attendance (because of the substantial transportation, scheduling, and other barriers faced each week), some partners did not cover all of the curriculum materials.

Some grantees could not get approval from correctional facilities to bring partners into the facilities for any kind of couples-based programming. In these sites, relationship classes were instead offered through parallel programming. Parallel programming entailed incarcerated men taking classes in the correctional facility and partners taking classes in the community.

Finally, some programs adopted strategies to accommodate incarcerated men who either did not have partners or whose partners could not participate in programming. Some implemented both couples classes and dads-only classes, while others allowed men whose partners could not attend class to participate without their partners in the couples classes. These strategies were adopted to serve as many participants as possible. For example, CFSNH offered PREP in a couples format as well as women's retreats in the community and dads-only classes (PREP with Absent Partners) in the facilities. Similarly, LSSSD and Shelby County DOC (TN) both added dads-only healthy relationship classes in year four to accommodate men who did not have partners or whose partners could not attend couples classes.

Spotlight on Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)

Six MFS-IP grantees chose to use PREP's Within Our Reach or Within My Reach curriculum, which were specifically targeted to low-income families, for their healthy marriage and relationship education component:

- **Within Our Reach** is a program designed to help couples achieve their goals in relationships, family, and marriage. The curriculum is designed to build on the existing strengths of the couple and add critical life and relationship skills to help participants create safer, more stable couple relationships—and, by extension, better environments for their children. Unit titles include "We've Got Issues"; "By My Side: Supporting Each Other"; "You, Me, and Us"; and "Connecting with Community."
- **Within My Reach** is a program designed for individuals that covers three major themes—Building Relationships, Maintaining Relationships, and Making Relationship Decisions. Unit titles include "Healthy Relationships: What They Are and What They Aren't"; "Knowing Yourself First"; "Dangerous Patterns in Relationships"; "Commitment: Why it Matters to Adults and Children"; and "Reaching into Your Future."

Sites varied in the extent to which they tried to ensure that partners who could not attend classes received the course material. NJDOC implemented a distance-learning format in year four of its grant to accommodate partners who were interested in participating but unable to attend sessions with their partners. This format involved mailing the partner a copy of the course materials with a request to complete the homework materials and mail them back. Similarly, in year four, OLHSA (MI) began a telephone component for partners who could not attend the community-based healthy relationship workshops for partners of incarcerated men. Partners were sent the Within My Reach workbook and completed it over

eight telephone conversations with two staff members. Centerforce (CA) accommodated women who could not participate in the couples workshops by incorporating the content of the workshops into the case management sessions received by the women.

Relationship Education for Released Men and Their Partners

Table 5-1 also shows the relationship education services that were available to men who were released during their participation in MFS-IP programming (MNCCJ, OLHSA [MI], and LSSSD) and to their partners (OLHSA [MI] and LSSSD). MNCCJ and OLHSA [MI] added this service in year four. MNCCJ began offering dads-only post-release healthy relationships classes in year four to accommodate men who were not able to receive the class during their incarceration, either because the facility did not allow the classes to be taught or because the men were released before the classes could be offered. This class for men paralleled the women's healthy relationship class, which was always offered to partners in the community during the man's incarceration. OLHSA (MI) and LSSSD offered community-based couples' retreats to accommodate partners who either could not attend prison-based classes or preferred to wait and take classes together after the incarcerated partner's release. However, LSSSD reported that a very small number of couples attended in year three and none attended in year four. OLHSA (MI) did not provide attendance data for these post-release retreats.

Relationship Education for Formerly Incarcerated Men and Their Partners

Finally, Table 5-1 shows the relationship education services that were delivered to formerly incarcerated men and their partners. Among the three programs that provided relationship education classes to this population (Centerforce [CA], OLHSA [MI], TXPOP), the classes were delivered in a community setting and offered jointly to couples.

5.1.2 Relationship Education Curricula

The relationship education curricula used by the MFS-IP grantees addressed the three basic components of healthy marriage and relationship education as required by OFA: improving communication within couples, improving a couple's ability to resolve conflicts, and strengthening a couple's commitment to marital or relationship stability. The particular curriculum used varied by grantee.

Commercially Available Curricula

In delivering their relationship education classes, six MFS-IP grantees used the PREP curriculum. Most sites used Within Our Reach (PREP Educational Products, Inc., 2008) or Within My Reach (PREP for Individuals, Inc., 2008), versions of the curriculum tailored for delivery to low-income couples or individuals. However, in year four, IDOC (IN) switched to the new version of PREP developed for incarcerated men (Walking the Line; PREP for Individuals, Inc., 2010) for its men-only Prep for PREP classes.

In addition to PREP, four grantees used other commercial curricula, including Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS Essentials; PAIRS Foundation, 2010), Exploring Healthy Relationships and Marriage with Fragile Families (Center for Urban

Families, 2004), Married and Loving It (MALI Inc., 2011), and Couple Communication I and II (Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., 2011 and 2010, respectively). These commercially available courses focused on helping couples learn relationship skills, such as effective communication and conflict resolution.[9]

Adapted Curricula

Osborne (NY) incorporated input from incarcerated men in adapting two commercially available curricula (PREP and PAIRS) for use with its target population. Similarly, Centerforce (CA) incorporated some elements of other curricula, along with feedback from incarcerated men, in its couples' workshop curriculum. The adaptations emphasized ways to maintain family relationships during and after incarceration and addressed other needs of the populations served in these sites (see **Section 6.2** for more information on common curriculum adaptations).

5.2 PARENTING EDUCATION

Although not a required program component, almost all sites delivered parenting education as part of the MFS-IP program. For some grantees, parenting classes served as a gateway or prerequisite for relationship education and couples-based service components. As noted in **Section 4**, many grantees increasingly emphasized the parenting aspect of their MFS-IP programs over the course of their grants in order to more effectively recruit participants. This decision was made based on staff observations that incarcerated men who might otherwise be resistant to relationship-oriented programs often were drawn to participate in parenting classes.

As with relationship education classes, grantees varied widely in their approach to delivering parenting education. Different approaches for course structure and curricula are discussed below.

5.2.1 Parenting Education Course Format

Unlike relationship classes, which typically were delivered to men and their partners, parenting education classes generally were delivered to men only. Among the two programs that did provide parenting classes to partners as well as fathers, the classes were either delivered jointly to couples or separately via men's and women's classes. As shown in Table 5-1, the MDDHR Adam's House program was the only site serving formerly incarcerated men that taught parenting classes to this population. The remaining programs offered parenting classes only during the men's incarceration.

All grantees that offered parenting courses delivered them weekly for two months or longer, instead of the intensive retreat format commonly used for relationship education courses. Some sites provided additional supports to their parenting education components. CFSNH reinforced the messages taught in its parenting classes by requiring men to participate in

[9] None of these curricula is endorsed by RTI, the evaluation contractor, or by HHS, the funder of the MFS-IP evaluation. Names of curricula are provided to give the reader a more specific understanding of project activities.

weekly support groups during the time they were taking the parenting course. Shelby County established a fatherhood dorm to house men during the 15 weeks of their participation in the program. Program staff and participants agreed that the dorm allowed participants to create a subculture apart from the rest of the facility, in which men could stay focused on their goals, complete homework assignments without harassment, and hold one another accountable in their day-to-day actions. In addition to active program participants, men who had completed the program and been selected by instructors to continue serving in a peer mentor role also lived in the fatherhood dorm.

Parenting Class Observations

During the year four site visits, RTI teams observed five parenting classes. The classes included both corrections- and community-based classes. Class duration was similar across sites, lasting between one and two hours. The classes covered

- discipline and punishment,
- resiliency in children, and
- coparenting after prison.

Facilitators used a variety of teaching styles, including

- lecture,
- discussion, and
- activities such as role playing.

Observer ratings of participation and engagement among participants showed that the parenting classes had very high levels of engagement. In four of the five classes, 100% of participants were verbally engaged.

5.2.2 Parenting Education Curricula

Grantees varied in the specific curricula selected for their sites, but core topics were included in most curricula, including the importance of father involvement, communication with children and other family members, child development, discipline techniques, and anger management.

Commercially Available Curricula

Most MFS-IP grantees used commercially available parenting courses that were not specifically developed for use with a justice-involved population, such as Active Parenting Now (Active Parenting Publishers, Inc., 2002); Families in Focus (Council on Crime and Justice, 2006); 24/7 Dad™ (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2003); and a curriculum from the Love and Logic program.[10]

[10] None of these curricula is endorsed by RTI, the evaluation contractor or by HHS, the funder of the MFS-IP evaluation. Names of curricula are provided to give the reader a more specific understanding of project activities.

Grantee Perspectives: What Parenting Class Topics Were Most Engaging?

During the year four site visits, staff were asked about the topics covered in parenting classes that were most engaging for participants. Staff noted that in the prison-based classes, men were most engaged in the topic of communication because of the difficulties they experienced in keeping their families connected during the limited time available for telephone calls and visits. In the community-based parenting classes, the topics of generational patterns and discipline versus punishment were believed to be engaging for both men and women.

Some grantees added supplemental content to commercial curricula to make them more sensitive to fatherhood issues specific to incarcerated men.

Two grantees (MDDHR [Montgomery County] and Shelby County DOC [TN]) chose a commercial curriculum designed for incarcerated fathers, InsideOut Dad™ (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2005). This curriculum is intended to help incarcerated fathers connect with their families in preparation for release.[11]

Original Curricula Created by Grantees

Finally, five grantees implemented original, in-house parenting curricula as part of their MFS-IP–funded work. These included

- Keeping Families and Inmates Together in Harmony (Keeping FAITH), developed by the RIDGE (OH) founders;
- Back to the Family, developed by Centerforce (CA) and its subcontractor APPLE FamilyWorks with extensive input from incarcerated fathers;
- Fathers Connecting with Children, developed by CFSNH and its partner, the New Hampshire Department of Corrections;
- Basic Parenting, developed by Osborne (NY) in collaboration with incarcerated fathers and academic experts in the field of incarceration and parenting; and
- Male-Female Parenting, developed by MDDHR for a previous responsible fatherhood initiative, which was adapted for incarcerated fathers as part of the MFS-IP program.

For more information on the parenting education curricula used among the MFS-IP grantees see McKay et al, evaluation brief #5, *Parenting from Prison: Innovative Programs to Support Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers* (2010), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Innovative/rb.shtml

[11] IDOC (IN) also used InsideOut Dad in a separate program funded under responsible fatherhood priority area 3. This program also included a "Read to me, Dad" component and several events for children, caregivers and fathers.

Evaluation Perspectives: What Helped Grantees Maintain Consistent Service Delivery?

Program integrity, or the extent to which grantees implemented all service components as planned without major interruptions or disruptions in service delivery, is an important implementation outcome. In the context of novel and ambitious efforts to engage incarcerated men and their families in family-strengthening services, implementation of services was a learning experience for all grantees. Many service components were not implemented as planned and were adapted, either because of institutional obstacles or participant challenges. The following factors helped grantees maintain program integrity and continue service uninterrupted:

- **Beginning the grant with a proposed program that was well aligned with OFA objectives** (in particular, a focus on couples-based healthy marriage and relationship education) and correctional facility interest, which required less initial restructuring. Funded programs that focused on potential fathers, for example, needed to revise their plans to focus on men who were fathers.
- **Having prior organizational experience delivering similar services.** This offered grantees an advantage because they were more able to understand what was feasible, anticipate obstacles, and generate strategies to overcome challenges.
- **Drawing on program leaders' experience with corrections culture.** Experienced leaders were able to understand the language and protocols used by institution staff and communicate more effectively to resolve issues.

5.3 OTHER FAMILY SUPPORTS

In addition to classroom-based healthy relationship and parenting education, MFS-IP grantees supported families in other ways. As shown in Table 5-1 (above), many grantees offered some form of in-person visitation support or other assistance in maintaining family contact during incarceration.

This subsection describes additional family supports, including

- in-person visitation support,
- other assistance in maintaining family contact during incarceration, and
- family group conferencing and family counseling.

5.3.1 In-Person Visitation Support

A number of sites provided some form of visitation support for incarcerated men and their families.

Child-friendly Visitation

Four grantees, all of them run from within the correctional system or by non-profit agencies with very strong, long-term relationships with the correctional system, successfully created and managed dedicated child-friendly visitation rooms.

Hands-on Parenting Skills Practice

Three MFS-IP programs used parent-child visitation to offer active parenting supports and activities such as family meals, marking holidays and birthdays with special activities, conducting joint skills-building activities with fathers and children, and devoting parts of visitation time to group conversations or games.

Other Visitation Assistance

Several MFS-IP grantees implemented other strategies to support in-person visitation. For example, case managers in the NJDOC site worked individually with each family, contacting coparents or caregivers to help them make arrangements for visitation and obtain and submit the documentation required by facilities to bring a child for visitation. MNCCJ, RIDGE (OH), and Shelby County DOC (TN) supported visitation by defraying the cost of prison visits for children or their caregivers. In addition, as noted previously, all grantees that sponsored couples retreats defrayed the costs of transportation, lodging, and meals to enable partners to attend the in-prison programming.

5.3.2 Supporting Long-Distance Communication

The MFS-IP programs undertook a host of other creative strategies to help families supplement in-person visits and increase the level of connectedness between incarcerated fathers and their families. For example, CFSNH set up a remote visiting infrastructure that allowed incarcerated participants to connect via video feed with their children and partners at local program offices in the community. They also offered fathers the chance to create storybook audiotapes for their children.

In a similar effort, LSSSD provided participating fathers with a free or subsidized DVD and the chance to record themselves doing something special for their children, such as reading a book, reading a letter, or playing a musical instrument. LSSSD distributed information on how to stay connected with one's children while incarcerated and stationery kits to facilitate contact with children and partners.

5.3.3 Family Group Conferencing and Family Counseling

Shelby County DOC (TN) offered family group conferencing sessions in which incarcerated participants met with significant family members such as their parents, spouses, or romantic partners and coparents of their children. Discussions focused on expectations, fears, and hopes related to reentry, based on a predetermined list of important life domains. These structured conversations provided an opportunity for families to overcome fears, generate realistic expectations, and plan collaboratively for a successful return to the community. Although all participants were eligible for family group conferencing, program staff reported that very few families took advantage of it.

Three sites included family counseling as a program component offered to participants in year four. However, as with family group conferencing, program staff in OLHSA (MI) and Osborne (NY) indicated that participants rarely took advantage of this program component. One site, MNCCJ, experienced higher-than-expected demand for its family counseling

component, which averaged 10 sessions. Female partners usually received more therapy than incarcerated men because of challenges associated with prison-based service delivery.

Various other family supports, including innovative visitation opportunities and approaches to addressing coparenting (as well as parenting curriculum choices and curriculum delivery strategies) are discussed in detail by McKay and colleagues in evaluation brief #5, *Parenting from Prison: Innovative Programs to Support Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers* (2010), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Innovative/rb.shtml.

5.4 CASE MANAGEMENT

Seven MFS-IP grantees provided program participants with case management services. (An eighth grantee discontinued its case management component in year four because of the loss of key staff.) These services included the assessment of needs in a variety of areas (e.g., substance abuse, mental health, employment, education, housing), referrals to or direct provision of services to address these needs, and follow-up to ensure receipt of the services. Some sites provided case management to a small subset of program participants. Case management sessions were typically held individually but sometimes entailed joint couples sessions. Although many sites planned to follow released men and their partners for post-release case management, participation in this program component was extremely limited. In addition, much of the post-release contact was conducted by telephone.

Among the case management approaches the MFS-IP grantees used, unique strategies included

- family reunification case management, which entailed pre- and post-release sessions with reentering men and their partners (Centerforce [CA], CFSNH, SC DOC [TN]);
- a case advocacy approach entailing ongoing support to men and partners during the man's entire incarceration and up to one year post-release (MNCCJ);
- the use of case management sessions to reinforce healthy relationships course content (LSSSD, NJDOC, and Centerforce [CA]);
- including an employment specialist in case management sessions (SC DOC [TN]); and
- a focus on helping participants navigate existing systems and resources in their communities (Osborne [NY], OLHSA [MI]).

5.5 OTHER INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS

Some sites did not provide formal case management (i.e., regular, ongoing meetings with case managers) but did link participants to a variety of supports upon request. The nature of such supports often depended on what other programs were run by the grantee organization and its closest partners in the community. For example, MDDHR (Adam's House) was located within a community health center that had established partnerships with

the local child support agency and a variety of other partners, and was able to assist clients with navigating those agencies.

5.6 ECONOMIC STABILITY SERVICES

Initially, only a few MFS-IP grantees planned to provide economic stability services to participants. However, the grantees increasingly recognized the importance of these services as their participants struggled with employment and requested assistance in this area. By year four, five grantees had established an economic stability component. This typically included job readiness training and job placement or job-search coaching assistance.

For example, Shelby County DOC (TN) incorporated comprehensive content related to economic stability into its 12-week economic stability and parenting course, which included

- daily GED instruction;
- 12.5 hours of class time using the Fannie Mae Basic Financial Management curriculum, which covered topics such as developing a spending plan, opening and managing checking and savings accounts, understanding credit and credit reports, and getting a loan;
- 12.5 hours of employment skills training, which included a vocational assessment and an individualized results report to the participant; and
- 15 hours of job readiness training, which covered topics such as entrepreneurship, work ethics, how to fill out an employment application, how to create a resume, and other job preparedness skills.

In addition, Shelby County's employment specialist organized job fairs, provided individual coaching on resumes and job applications, and helped to place participants in positions with local employers with whom he built partnerships during the grant.

5.7 OTHER GROUP-BASED PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Some grantees offered other services to program participants, which are described below. Domestic violence education, another component provided in several sites, is discussed in **Section 6**.

5.7.1 Support Groups

Two grantees offered support groups as of year four. At CFSNH, attendance at weekly support groups was required for men who participated in parenting classes. OLHSA (MI) offered support groups for couples who lived in the community and who had completed the couples' workshop. The groups met weekly for six to eight weeks and were facilitated by a counselor and intern. However, support group enrollment was very low.

5.7.2 Substance Abuse Treatment

NJDOC, which originally designed its program specifically for substance-abusing men, was the only MFS-IP program to deliver substance abuse treatment. All participating fathers were encouraged to attend a 12-week Living in Balance workshop series, which focused on addressing substance abuse issues and preventing relapse. These workshops were facilitated by the MFS-IP case managers and were taught specifically to participants in the MFS-IP program.

5.7.3 Group Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Two sites utilized cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Osborne (NY) conducted its CBT-based empowerment class, Breaking Barriers, using a 30-hour curriculum. Shelby County DOC (TN) provided group Moral Reconation Therapy, a 12-step-based CBT program, to all participants twice a week.

5.7.4 Life Skills Workshops

Finally, MNCCJ added life skills and empowerment workshops in year four as additional offerings for released men. The empowerment workshop was a 26-hour course, and the life skills workshop was a 20-hour course.

5.8 POST-RELEASE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

As evidenced in Table 5-1, most programs focused service delivery on incarcerated men and their partners. Very few services continued to be delivered to men after their release from incarceration. The programs that did deliver post-release services to men were case management–based programs that continued to provide case management. Two factors might explain the lack of emphasis on post-release services:

- Few MFS-IP programs were designed to be reentry focused (meaning that they served a to-be-released population and focused on assisting families through the reentry period).
- Most programs did not have the resources required to deliver post-release services, given the post-release geographic dispersion of men, staffing constraints, and lack of community organizational partners.

It is also important to note that, even among the programs that did not offer a formal post-release component, some did assist released men or their partners who contacted them for referrals or other individualized supports. In addition, two programs had the infrastructure to serve families through other existing programs and services delivered by the grantee agency.

5.9 SECTION SUMMARY

OFA required grantees to deliver couples-based programs that included relationship education as a core component. Other than this requirement, grantees had flexibility to

customize their programs according to the needs of their target populations and the resources available to them.

Services varied widely across grantees, and many grantees allowed participants to select the services of interest to them or targeted certain services to subsets of eligible participants. Offering some program components to men and others to couples only was a common approach employed across the grantees. All grantees delivered a relationship education class as a core program component; a couples-based class was the most common format and the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) was the most frequently used curriculum. Most grantees also delivered parenting education courses, with these courses generally delivered to men only.

Other program components varied widely among grantees and included in-person visitation support, other assistance in maintaining family contact during incarceration, family group conferencing, family counseling, case management or other individualized approaches to connect participants with services, economic stability services (employment assistance, financial literacy classes, and general equivalency diploma or higher education classes), support groups, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence courses or workshops, and other group courses or workshops (such as cognitive behavioral training, life skills, and empowerment education).

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SECTION

6 Key Strategies for Service Delivery

During interviews, MFS program staff, participants and other key stakeholders discussed several essential strategies for service delivery, including

- addressing domestic violence,
- adapting relationship and parenting education curricula for relevance to the target population,
- making changes based on participant input,
- staffing effectively, and
- keeping participants engaged.

This section describes how MFS grantees used each of these approaches to support their work with incarcerated and reentering fathers and their partners.

6.1 ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When asked about the need to address domestic violence in family-strengthening programs for incarcerated and reentering fathers and their partners, interviewees from all sites affirmed its importance. However, each site adopted a different approach to identifying domestic violence risk among participants and providing preventative services.

6.1.1 Domestic Violence Protocols

OFA required every grantee to develop a domestic violence protocol as part of its MFS-IP–funded work. All grantees reported compliance with this requirement, but in the absence of specific guidance from OFA on what a protocol should include, interpretations varied widely. Domestic violence protocols across the sites took a number of different forms, such as

- a memorandum of understanding with a community-based domestic violence agency outlining the services (e.g., training, receipt of referrals) that the agency agreed to provide for the grantee;
- a description of the contents of an educational workshop on domestic violence to be delivered to participants; or
- a description of the procedures to be used to screen or assess for domestic violence risk, provide appropriate services to individuals identified as being at elevated risk,

and respond to incidents of domestic violence that might occur during program participation.

Sites that worked closely with a community-based domestic violence agency or coalition during the program design and early implementation phase, as well as sites that involved a domestic violence partner in a paid consulting role at some point during the grant period, most often took the third approach.

6.1.2 Detecting Domestic Violence Risk upon Enrollment

Procedures for detecting domestic violence risk varied across sites and included the use of correctional information systems, screening of prospective participants as part of program intake, and screening using standard tools followed by referral for clinical assessment by a community-based domestic violence agency.

Screening Using Correctional Databases

Correctional agency grantees and grantees that had very close working relationships with their correctional partners often relied on correctional information systems for information about prospective participants' domestic violence risk. These grantees drew on existing correctional assessment and case management protocols for multiple screening purposes (including identifying prospective participants' mental health and substance abuse issues) and regarded these same systems as a source of information on domestic violence risk.

In these sites, grantees or their correctional partners typically accessed prospective participants' electronic records at the time that eligibility was determined. During this stage, those with a domestic violence history as documented in the correctional information system were excluded from participation. Interviewees explained that at-risk men identified in this manner included those who were convicted of a domestic violence crime, those who had a current restraining order against them, and those who disclosed a history of domestic violence to a corrections-employed case manager. In one site, grantee staff were unfamiliar with the screening procedures used by the correctional partner to refer men to the program but assumed that a referral meant that the men were suitable for the program from a domestic violence risk perspective.

Screening without Correctional Databases

Staff at sites without access to correctional databases often screened for domestic violence as part of their individual intake meetings with prospective participants. Sites commonly included screening questions designed to capture

- whether the enrollee was the subject of a current restraining order preventing contact with his proposed program partner,
- whether the enrollee had a criminal history of domestic violence, and
- whether the enrollee had a history of abusive behavior with his proposed program partner.

Two sites referred prospective participants for a full clinical assessment by an outside provider on the basis of their initial screening. At these sites, men whose initial screening results suggested that they were at elevated risk for perpetrating domestic violence were referred to a community-based domestic violence agency for a full clinical assessment. A third site conducted a full in-house clinical assessment for domestic violence risk using clinically trained program staff.

> *[Screening both partners is] a safety consideration. If you just used the Propensity for Abusiveness Scale with men, you'd miss 15% of those [needing domestic violence treatment]. If you only used the Family Secret Scale with women, you'd miss about 12 to 13%.*
>
> *-A local program evaluator*

Despite the apparent similarities in protocol at the two sites that referred to an external provider for clinical assessment, the results differed. At one site, many men were identified for, referred to, and provided with batterer intervention over the life of the grant. At the other site, no men even made it to the clinical assessment phase. Interviewees described differences in screening protocols at the two sites that likely accounted for this difference. At one site, the screening tool used with men, the Propensity for Abusiveness Scale, was designed to identify individuals at high risk for domestic violence perpetration on the basis of related constructs (e.g., family history and attitudes) without requiring the prospective enrollee to directly disclose abusive behavior. At the other site, the screening tool used required men to self-report abusive behavior to be identified as being at high risk.

Two sites completed individual screenings for domestic violence risk with both members of the couple, using male- and female-tailored measures. Those men who appeared to be at elevated risk based either on their own screening results or their partner's results were referred for treatment or clinical assessment. LSSSD staff reported that as of the end of year four, 34.5% of all couples screened for the program had been identified as being at elevated risk for domestic violence. Of these, all but two were confirmed (via clinical assessment by the partner agency, Compass Center) as needing domestic violence intervention.

6.1.3 Rethinking Enrollment Screening Procedures

Interviewees at sites (other than LSSSD) that screened incarcerated participants at the time of enrollment observed that these procedures did not yield any positive screens. Some staff felt that this screening approach made detection of domestic violence risk unlikely because men with a documented history of domestic violence issues or current restraining order likely would self-select out of the program.

Staff also observed that incarcerated men were unlikely to disclose any history of abusive behavior because that disclosure could negatively affect them. Staff suggested that they would consider using a different screening tool that did not require men's self-disclosure of abusive behavior.

Interviewees at the one site that identified a large number of at-risk participants (LSSSD) reinforced that lesson, and also suggested the importance of screening both members of the couple independently to ensure that all participants at elevated risk for domestic violence are identified and referred.

Finally, interviewees at several sites noted that when domestic violence issues were self-disclosed by a participant, it typically occurred later in the program. By this point, a strong, trusting relationship was built between the participant and the staff member. Grantees felt the development of staff–participant rapport might have created a more comfortable environment for disclosure compared to the initial intake interview (when many grantees administered a domestic violence screening, but typically elicited no disclosures). For this reason, some grantees suggested that if they had to design their screening procedures over again, they would consider placing a stronger emphasis on self-disclosure during program participation, rather than assuming the accuracy of screening results at the time of program intake.

6.1.4 Domestic Violence Exclusion Criteria

All grantees that provided couples-based classes excluded men who had a current restraining order that prohibited them from contact with their identified partner. Some sites also excluded men with a criminal history of domestic violence. One, RIDGE (OH), permitted men with a history of domestic violence conviction to participate if their partners were on the prison facility's approved visitation list or if clearance for the partner's participation in the prison-based course could be arranged through communications with the correctional partner.

> *The opportunity to talk with other guys and process this stuff is a real fundamental thing. They've never done this before, and it's probably the scariest thing they've ever done: tough guys sitting around talking with other tough guys about hurting and being vulnerable.*
>
> *-A program stakeholder*

Three sites required that staff identify men at elevated risk for perpetrating domestic violence, regardless of their criminal record, so that these men could be referred for treatment before receiving family-strengthening services. An interviewee from LSSSD cited research suggesting that providing relationship education to domestic violence perpetrators was harmful to domestic violence victims because the coursework provided perpetrators with more tools with which to manipulate their partners. Therefore, this interviewee felt that it was critical to ensure that domestic violence perpetrators had completed batterer intervention treatment before participating in family-strengthening programming.

6.1.5 Domestic Violence Education

Domestic Violence Education for Perpetrators

As noted above, two grantees referred participants who met clinical assessment criteria for domestic violence perpetration to 25- or 26-week batterer intervention courses. At LSSSD, this course was provided within the correctional facilities served by the grant and was

financed by grant funds. Interviewees regarded the course as highly effective. At MDDHR, this service was available to prospective participants through the county Department of Human Services but was not used because no men were assessed as needing it.

A third grantee, RIDGE (OH), referred men who exhibited a propensity toward domestic violence while participating in the couples communication courses to a batterer intervention course provided by the state prison system. The program required that this course be completed before the couple could resume participating in relationship education; however, this requirement was seldom put into effect due to a lack of detection of domestic violence during programming.

Incorporating Domestic Violence Modules into Other Activities

More commonly, MFS-IP grantees incorporated brief educational content on domestic violence into regular program activities. These shorter modules focused exclusively on domestic violence but were typically delivered to participants who were already receiving other program components. For example, NJDOC added a one-session, couples-based domestic violence workshop based on the National Fatherhood Initiative Curriculum.[12] The workshop was delivered at correctional facilities at the program's regular evening class time to participants who completed the Married and Loving It course, before they began the couples-based parenting course. It included a particular focus on men's roles in domestic violence, both as partners and as fathers.

Two grantees contracted with local domestic violence providers to provide presentations on domestic violence during their courses. At OLHSA (MI), a contracted domestic violence provider presented a two-hour interactive unit on family violence during the couples-based relationship education course. Shelby County DOC [TN] invited a domestic violence provider to present to fathers during its parenting class and separately to partners and caregivers while their children participated in child-friendly visitation.

Instructors and participants also reported that information on domestic violence was integrated into their existing parenting and relationship education curricula. For example, Centerforce (CA)'s parenting curriculum, Back to Family, included a unit on the impact of family violence and other forms of abuse on children's well-being. According to participants, examining the issue of domestic violence from the perspective of children's experiences was memorable and compelled them to pay more attention to the subject.

Role of Relationship Education in Domestic Violence Prevention

Interviewees from other sites proposed that some aspects of parenting and relationship education work might help prevent domestic violence perpetration among participating men. Interviewees at IDOC (IN) noted that their relationship education curriculum (a newly released version of PREP) integrated safety concerns into every aspect of course content

[12] None of these curricula is endorsed by RTI, the evaluation contractor or by HHS, the funder of the MFS-IP evaluation. Names of curricula are provided to give the reader a more specific understanding of project activities.

and suggested that this information might help couples reduce the potential for domestic violence.

Some interviewees advocated for the importance of offering some form of domestic violence education to all participants in corrections-based family-strengthening programs. One interviewee argued, "Even if they didn't commit a violent offense to get here, just by being in a prison they're being steeped in violence." Yet an interviewee from a site that did not offer any domestic violence education components felt that domestic violence-related content was not relevant to couples in which one partner was incarcerated, because any personal contact the couple might have was closely monitored during incarceration.

There's a certain hardness you have to have in prison, but we can show them a different way of dealing with situations [while] still presenting themselves from a masculine standpoint… to be manly without resorting to violence.

-A program staff member

Other interviewees mentioned that despite a lack of opportunities for physical abuse, verbal abuse appeared to be highly prevalent among participating couples. One program leader suggested that providing domestic violence education about verbal abuse was crucial for incarcerated participants because the information had immediate relevance and could be more readily applied to participants' current interactions with their partners.

6.1.6 Individual Supports Related to Domestic Violence

Interviewees at most sites mentioned that program staff were available to provide individualized support for participants dealing with domestic violence in their relationships. Among grantees that provided other forms of individualized support (e.g., counseling or case management), support related to domestic violence was offered as needed by program staff in the course of their regular work with participants. At these and other sites, referrals to outside resources were made available to participants who self-identified as needing domestic violence–related assistance.

6.2 ADAPTING CURRICULA TO ENSURE RELEVANCE

All sites expressed a need to adapt course materials to make them relevant to participants' lives. As described in **Section 5**, grantees used a variety of parenting and relationship education curricula to guide their group classes. Most used commercially available curricula; some were designed for use with families affected by incarceration and others were not. Other grantees developed original curricula tailored for their target populations.

6.2.1 Adapting Relationship and Parenting Education Content

Staff observed that most unmarried current and prospective participants did not seem to relate to content that focused on marriage. However, the goals of strengthening family relationships, improving parenting, and improving communication between romantic partners and coparents during incarceration were emphasized and typically resonated well.

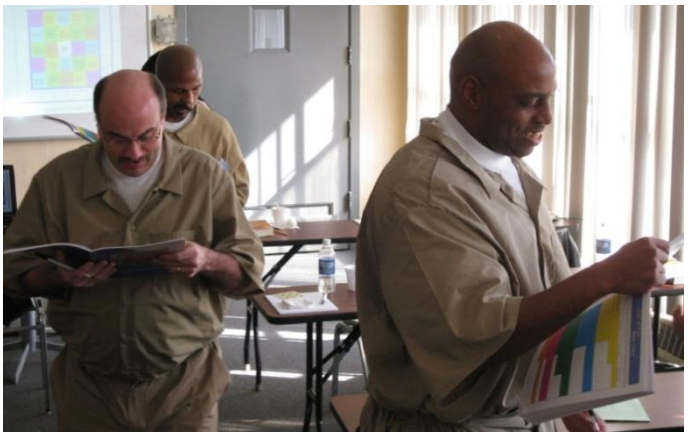
Although most grantees delivered healthy marriage and relationship education jointly to couples, others offered parallel community-based classes for partners either in addition to or instead of joint classes. (See **Section 5** for a complete discussion of relationship class formats offered by the MFS-IP grantees.)

Adapting the Content of Marriage and Relationship Education Courses

Common adaptations to the content of healthy marriage and relationship education curricula included

- ► focusing on improving romantic and coparenting relationships (including marriages, dating relationships, domestic partnerships, and non-romantic coparenting relationships), rather than focusing specifically on getting or staying married; and
- ► adding content specific to the psychological impact of incarceration on couple relationships, such as the concepts of "institutionalized mind" and "prisonization" and their implications for maintaining closeness during one partner's incarceration and reestablishing family dynamics after release.

At right: Participants in men-only healthy relationship classes at the Indiana Department of Corrections.[13]



Among sites that offered dads-only relationship education classes, these sessions usually included only men who reported having a committed romantic or coparenting partner. Still, staff and client interview data suggest that men whose partners were unable or unwilling to attend relationship education classes with them may have been less emotionally close to their partners, in less frequent contact, or less certain of the status of their romantic commitment.

Staff delivering healthy marriage and relationship education curricula to men-only classes commonly made a number of adaptations specific to that audience, including

- eliminating breakout exercises designed for couples to participate in together;

[13] All MFS-IP program participants whose faces appear in photographs in this report provided written permission for their photographs to appear.

- shifting emphasis from couples-based reflection and planning toward individual skills development, self-reflection, and goal-setting; and
- framing communication and conflict management skills in terms of their applicability to a variety of interpersonal situations beyond romantic relationships, such as parenting, employer-employee relationships, and relationships with other incarcerated men.

On the whole, grantees reported making fewer adaptations to the content of their parenting curricula than to their relationship education curricula—perhaps because many grantees used parenting curricula specifically designed for families affected by incarceration. A number of content-related adaptations, however, were relevant for both types of courses, including

Reflecting on efforts to tailor relationship skills content to couples in which one partner is incarcerated, one program staff member explained, "It's offensive to say, 'This is how you really do it, but here's how you have to do it on the inside.' It makes it seem inferior."

- spending less time on information that was less salient for participants, such as the research and statistics that were included with some curricula;
- spending more time on content that resonated strongly with participants, including communication skills, various exercises involving personality typing (e.g., Love Languages, Primary Colors[14]), and content related to employment; and
- sharing communication techniques that were applicable during the father's incarceration, such as letter-writing skills and skills for interacting during personal visits.

Finally, staff stressed that content adaptations for the prison setting, to be maximally effective, must not be presented as adaptations. By centering content that specifically addressed the needs of incarcerated fathers and their families, they suggested that programs could avoid sending an inadvertent message that justice-involved families' experiences were inferior or marginal.

[14] The "Five Love Languages" content encourages participants to understand their own and their partners' preferences for the expression of love. The "Primary Colors" content offers participants an approach to personality profiling for themselves and their partners.

Making Course Content Real: Providing Tailored Examples

Instructors met the need for accessible, relevant examples by

- ► constructing "what-if" scenarios to encourage participants to generate their own examples of ways to apply the principles covered in a given class session;
- ► sharing instructors' personal experiences with parenting, relationship, or reentry-related challenges; and
- ► incorporating participants' real-life experiences into the curriculum. For example, one grantee (Osborne [NY]) obtained family correspondence from former participants for use as examples in a module on men's and women's communication styles.

6.2.2 Adapting Course Language

In addition to adapting course content, instructors asserted that it sometimes was necessary to adapt the language used to deliver it. Several mentioned the need to accommodate participants with limited literacy by using simple, concrete language and by not presuming that all participants could read all course material independently. One grantee, TXPOP, noted that its curriculum was developed for learners at a fourth-grade level, but some participants nevertheless struggled with understanding the materials.

> *[The curriculum script] suggests a 'time out.' That's a joke to a guy in prison. Instead, I tell them to take a step back and exhale, which means to not be aggressive and to calm your body. [I tell them] to keep from 'clicking,' which is a term they understand.*
>
> *–A program staff member*

Staff at several sites underscored the importance of gauging participants' comprehension and slowing down or backing up as needed.

A number of grantees drew on the expertise of incarcerated or formerly incarcerated staff or volunteers to help address the need for language that was relevant to incarcerated men and their partners. In addition, instructors at most sites tended to adjust language to make it less formal and to include colloquial words and phrases that made more sense to participants.

Interviewees also discussed the importance of using cultural references in examples that were relevant to incarcerated men and their partners. According to staff, some of the references in their curricula were based on life experiences to which participants had difficulty relating. Several interviewees did suggest that participants related to specific examples with more interest and greater comprehension than more abstract concepts or principles. Instructors observed that appropriate, concrete examples were very important in helping participants grasp the key content of their curricula.

> *I can't sit here and tell this guy to imagine being in a park with birds flying and flowers around, which is what the curriculum wants, because these guys are hard and when they're here they don't want to become prey.*
>
> *–A program staff member*

6.2.3 Adapting Style of Delivery

Grantees relied heavily on traditional modes of information delivery during parenting and relationship education classes, including lectures by instructors and the review of written information via slides and workbooks. These approaches were supplemented with a variety of other teaching tools designed to keep participants interested and make concepts accessible.

Participatory Exercises and Individualized Interaction

All sites incorporated some form of interactive learning into their courses to encourage active engagement by participants, including class discussion, role-playing exercises, and games. Interviewees suggested that exercises that generated active personal engagement from participants were an important source of information for instructors. On the basis of what participants shared verbally, instructors could tailor the pace and content of the course to fit participants' learning styles, family histories (including family-related cultural values), and current family situations.

Instructors at many sites created regular opportunities for individual check-ins with participants to informally assess how they were relating to the course material, provide additional support if needed, and allow participants the opportunity to make up classes they missed via one-on-one tutorials.

Audio and Video Tools

Sites that implemented commercial relationship education curricula used video clips of partner interaction that were provided as part of these curricula. In addition, these and other sites supplemented with video clips that instructors selected (IDOC [IN]), shared YouTube videos created by reentering men (Shelby County DOC [TN]), or used professionally produced video lectures by experts (Osborne [NY]).

A few sites used audio-based teaching tools, including public service announcements (TXPOP), an original song about incarceration and family relationships (TXPOP), and popular music used to create a relaxed atmosphere while participants were completing individual writing exercises (LSSSD).

Importance of Confidentiality for Interactive Learning

Grantees noted that incorporating interactive modes of learning into prison-based courses required special care, mainly because of the danger associated with emotional vulnerability in a prison setting and the risk that personal information shared in the classroom would be used on the prison yard. Staff at Centerforce (CA) noted that confidentiality issues were of such immediate concern that instructors typically devoted two hours to this topic during the initial class sessions. Once participants understood the expectations for confidentiality, staff believed that they felt free to share their personal experiences and could integrate concepts more fully.

> *You've got to be sincere. They're reading you.*
>
> *-A program staff member*

6.3 MAKING CHANGES BASED ON PARTICIPANTS' INPUT

Sites solicited formal and informal input from participants using a combination of approaches, such as

- informal group feedback sessions or debriefings conducted after a class session or at the close of a weekend seminar (typically by someone other than the instructor);
- informal individual feedback obtained through one-on-one conversations between participants and staff;
- short feedback forms filled out by participants at the end of each class session, typically reviewed by instructors to inform implementation; and
- participant satisfaction surveys distributed upon completion of a program or course, typically used for local program evaluation purposes.

Sites also used data from participant surveys completed as part of local evaluation efforts to inform program implementation. For example, LSSSD and RIDGE (OH) both shared participants' aggregated survey responses with course facilitators and used results as an opportunity for targeted refresher training with staff.

6.3.1 Changes to Operations

Sites used participant feedback to adjust program operations without significantly altering their service delivery models. For example, MDDHR added individualized services to address participants' child support and child visitation issues in response to individual conversations with many participants for whom this need was very salient. Similarly, MNCCJ, Shelby County DOC (TN), and MDDHR strengthened their focus on job skills and job placement assistance partly because of information from participants about their pressing employment needs. Several sites, including NJDOC and OLHSA (MI), added transportation assistance for partners on the basis of feedback from prospective female enrollees that travel costs hindered participation.

6.3.2 Changes to Curricula

In addition to using participant feedback to expand services, some sites used it to guide modifications to their curricula. Participants' observations drove TXPOP to develop an additional class module, "The Institutionalized Mind," to supplement its relationship education curriculum.

6.4 STAFFING EFFECTIVELY

6.4.1 Hiring and Retaining Staff

Many interviewees observed that family-strengthening work with incarcerated and reentering fathers and their families is highly demanding. They asserted that managing and delivering services in both prison and community settings, while serving a population with broad and complex service needs, challenged the most skilled and experienced staff.

Strategies for Hiring Line Staff

Reflecting on their experiences over the first four years of the grant period, program staff proposed that effective service delivery personnel (e.g., course facilitators, case managers, and other staff providing direct services) should have

- sincere, visible passion for the work;
- ability to regard and interact with participants as equals;
- personal experience with topics salient to the program content, such as parenting, incarceration, reentry, or maintaining partnership with an incarcerated person;
- shared cultural history with participants (with regard to characteristics such as race/ethnicity, neighborhood, etc.) or strong cultural competency;
- strict adherence to facility protocols for prison-based service delivery (including punctuality and reliability);
- flexibility;
- self-directedness and self-discipline; and
- willingness to share personal experiences and challenges when relevant to the program focus.

Recommendations for Preventing Turnover

One grantee that experienced markedly low staff turnover, LSSSD, suggested that long-term retention was facilitated by

- ► choosing staff with a strong commitment to the goals of the program,
- ► prioritizing a history of work in corrections as a hiring criterion, and
- ► involving the correctional partner in the hiring process.

Participants related better to staff with prior ties to the communities served by the grants. These individuals also had stronger connections to local resources that could benefit participants.

Grantees' perspectives differed on the importance of certain types of professional experience in selecting program staff. Some prioritized experience in community-based case management, others explicitly preferred clinical training (lending "an ability to listen well and let people fix things themselves"), while some looked for experience in corrections.

Participant Perspectives: Desirable Staff Characteristics

Program participants also were asked to identify qualities and characteristics of effective program staff. Instructors' personal life experiences and their ability to relate those experiences to clients ("being real") were the qualities most commonly discussed. Some participants specifically suggested that staff who had experience with incarceration, parenting or both were better able to serve clients. Other qualities mentioned included

- ► an ability to treat participants as equals and with respect (not "talking down"),
- ► personal honor,
- ► visible passion for the work,
- ► strong knowledge of course content, and
- ► patience.

Strategies for Hiring Program Managers

Grantees also considered personal qualities necessary to manage family-strengthening programs for incarcerated and reentering fathers and families. Interviewees suggested that effective managers of these programs had

- the ability to be an outspoken advocate for the program,
- strong skills in forming and maintaining organizational partnerships,
- creativity and adaptability,
- familiarity with implementing federal grant-funded programs, and
- an affinity for data collection and monitoring.

Preventing and Managing Staff Turnover

As noted above, staff working on the MFS-IP grants dealt with challenging job responsibilities. New hires with experience working in both correctional and community settings were rare, and turnover was a common problem across grantee organizations.

Turnover was particularly problematic for grantees that operated out of state-funded agencies. These grantees faced the burden of state-level hiring protocols: they had to hire grant-funded staff either in contract positions with no benefits or via permanent state positions that often took months to create. In the former case, hiring was rapid but positions turned over more often. In the latter case, staff members were retained longer, but the cumbersome hiring process resulted in months-long vacancies in several sites. At many sites, the time required to obtain correctional background clearance for new staff members delayed full implementation. This issue was particularly common among agencies that deliberately recruited applicants with incarceration experience.

Strategies for Minimizing the Impact of Turnover

Grantees that coped with significant staff turnover or vacancies during the study period suggested minimizing the impact of turnover on service delivery by

- helping staff with different facility or community coverage responsibilities become familiar with one another's areas in case of absence or vacancy;

- cross training all staff, including program leaders, to be capable of covering a variety of service delivery functions when necessary; and
- training a very large pool of course facilitators (as many as 30 in one site) to ensure that teaching responsibilities can be covered regardless of unexpected circumstances.

6.4.2 Managing Service Delivery in Multiple Institutional Contexts

As discussed in **Section 2**, most grantees delivered programming at multiple correctional facilities or community residential facilities. For these grantees, service delivery in such varied institutional contexts posed a formidable management challenge. It necessitated that line staff members who were assigned to multiple facilities or who covered multiple facilities during times of personnel vacancy be able to

- gain clearance at all facilities,
- build multiple sets of relationships with correctional and community agency staff at the various facilities,
- cultivate a positive reputation among prospective and enrolled participants at the various facilities, and
- correctly adhere to detailed regulations and procedures that often differed significantly from location to location.

This service delivery approach also had implications for supervisory staff who were required to maintain strong organizational relationships with contacts at multiple locations and ensure that program components were delivered consistently, regardless of venue. Furthermore, supervisors had to stay abreast of staff progress and needs without the benefit of a single office to which all staff reported regularly. When asked to consider what staffing and coordination strategies helped them meet the challenges related to multiple service delivery settings, interviewees mentioned

- holding regular in-person staff meetings (typically weekly or monthly);
- requiring that staff participate in regular, simple, standardized reporting on their activities (compiling numbers of participants enrolled, numbers of participants attending each class session, number of case management sessions delivered);
- maintaining frequent e-mail and telephone contact between line staff and program leadership;
- providing line staff with sufficient autonomy to schedule their own work while maintaining accountability via circulation of class or other work schedules among the team members; and
- encouraging all staff to actively network with other service providers in the facilities and communities in which they worked.

6.5 KEEPING PARTICIPANTS ENGAGED

As discussed in **Section 4**, grantees faced many challenges in enrolling couples in their programs. Yet even after enrollment, grantees had to work hard to retain their participants. Participant engagement was a challenge common across many sites.

6.5.1 Engaging Incarcerated Participants

Grantees adjusted their program approaches to facilitate the retention of incarcerated participants. Incarcerated participants' commitment to ongoing participation in the program was thought to be influenced by their perceptions about the duration and relevance of the program, as well as the use of incentives.

Strategies for Encouraging Completion

Staff suggested that they had succeeded in encouraging participants to engage fully and to complete all program components by

- shortening the overall duration of the program or the duration of relationship education courses,
- making adaptations for cultural relevance and relevance to the prison context,
- involving former participants to vouch for the program's credibility and importance, and
- negotiating with correctional partners to provide incentives such as special visitation opportunities and credits toward probation upon program completion.

Clients and staff interviewed at sites that offered child-friendly visitation suggested that the opportunity for more high-quality contact with their children motivated participants to engage in and complete other aspects of the program, such as parenting and relationship education classes.

Strategies for Building Trust

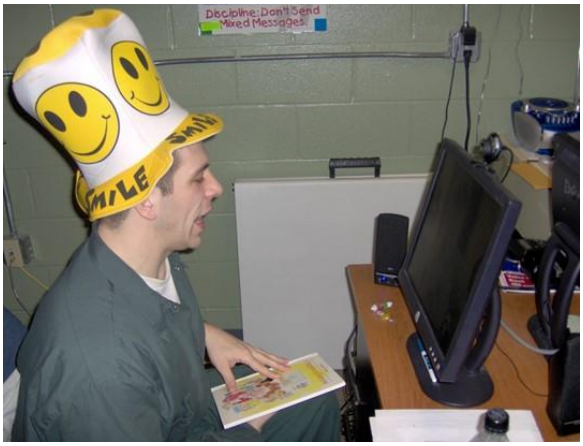
Other interviewees stressed the importance of building trust and rapport among participants, and between participants and course instructors, as a tool for improving retention. Trust-building strategies recommended by interviewees included

> *People don't want to feel preached to, but to feel a part of something.*
>
> *-A program staff member*

- encouraging instructors to share their own personal experiences and to create safe opportunities for participants to share with each other,
- listening well to participants' experiences and taking their opinions seriously,
- creating a non-punitive classroom environment, and
- holding regular "office hours" during which participants could drop in to discuss personal issues or make up content from a missed class.

Staff and participants alike suggested that those who saw clear results from their engagement with the program (e.g., the successful resolution of a relationship conflict or reinitiation of contact with their children) were much more likely to remain involved. Participants from multiple sites also stressed the importance of learning new communication skills and having the opportunity to practice those skills through visitation opportunities, joint class participation with their partners, or both.

At right: A father incarcerated at the New Hampshire Department of Corrections participates in a video visit with his child.



More information on retention strategies can be found in evaluation brief #3 Strengthening the Couple and Family Relationships of Fathers Behind Bars: The Promise and Perils of Corrections-Based Programming (2009), by Smiley McDonald and colleagues available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Corrections-Based/rb.shtml.

6.5.2 Engaging Partners in the Community

Grantees faced numerous obstacles to retaining partners in the community, such as women's time constraints (including work schedules), parenting responsibilities, difficulty gaining facility access, and lack of transportation.

Most partners who enrolled in MFS-IP programs were low-income mothers already balancing work and parenting responsibilities while coping with a loss of family income from the incarcerated partner and the added resource strain of maintaining contact during his incarceration. Among the partners who enrolled in programming despite such obstacles, the barriers continued to challenge consistent participation in program activities. To better retain partners in programming, grantees found solutions to key participation challenges.

Transportation and Child Care Needs

Grantees provided various forms of transportation assistance to participating partners, including bus passes, gas cards, travel expense reimbursement, and prearranged group transportation. Some also designed their programs to minimize the transportation burden on participants by serving only those who lived in a small catchment area close to the location of program activities.

Grantees addressed participants' lack of child care by furnishing or reimbursing for child care, allowing participants to bring young children to classes with them, or timing program activities for adults to coincide with parallel activities for children.

Competing Time Commitments

Many grantees provided valuable incentives to partners to help compensate them for the time they invested in program participation. These commonly included gift cards, but in one site (Shelby County DOC [TN]) the program also provided school uniform vouchers for children.

Facility Access Problems

Program staff at several sites submitted background clearance forms and other paperwork on behalf of partners. One site (LSSSD) worked closely with its partner correctional agency, the South Dakota Department of Corrections, to arrange special admittance for some partners who otherwise would not have been permitted inside their facilities due to their criminal histories.

Changing Contact Information

Interviewees from several sites emphasized the importance of maintaining consistent contact with female participants once they enrolled. Staff recounted their success in keeping partners engaged after enrollment by contacting them periodically over a period of several months, even when the partner did not initially respond. For example, OLHSA (MI) implemented an eight-session telephone contact component, and site staff believed that the rapport built with female participants over the course of these calls secured partners' commitment to participation. Many programs also found that presenting partners with multiple opportunities to attend their prison-based relationship seminars over an extended period of time was important in helping partners complete the program.

More information on the challenges of engaging partners in the community and strategies for addressing them are discussed by McKay and colleagues in evaluation brief #4, *Bringing Partners into the Picture: Family-Strengthening Programming for Incarcerated Fathers* (2009), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/mfs-ip/Partners/rb.shtml.

6.5.3 Engaging Reentering Men and Their Partners

All grantees that delivered services to men and their partners after release as part of their MFS-IP programs reported serious retention challenges after the man's release. Staff believed that these challenges derived from several factors.

Desire to Avoid Correctional Authorities

Released men and their partners were eager to move past the challenges and stigma associated with imprisonment, and they associated program participation with the incarceration. In addition, many released men preferred to remain under the radar and avoid unnecessary contact with correctional authorities or those with connections to correctional authorities.

Evaluation Perspectives: What Helped Grantees Engage and Retain Participants?

In addition to attracting participants to the programs, ensuring completion and sustaining interest throughout the course of the program are important components of program implementation. Therefore, participant engagement and retention are core implementation outcomes considered in the MFS-IP evaluation. As discussed throughout this section, the grantees faced many challenges retaining and fully engaging participants in their program components.

Grantees' approaches to service delivery inherently affected participant retention, with program duration having a fundamental influence on the likelihood that programming was completed. Obviously, among grantees with very short programs, retention was not a major concern. This was especially true for partners, where the likelihood of completing the program (once the partner had shown up initially to participate) was virtually guaranteed for one-time commitments (e.g., weekend retreats). Conversely, grantees who delivered multiple services over an extended period of time had to work hard to maximize the likelihood of program completion, particularly for partners. Strategies that appeared to be associated with successful retention in programs of an extended duration included

- offering participants incentives at regular intervals in the program to encourage program completion,
- listening to participant feedback and following through on program offerings and promises made to participants, and
- offering opportunities for one-on-one conversations with staff and opportunities to make up program content missed.

Although participant engagement is a factor that influenced participant retention in programs of lengthy duration, it is also a stand-alone implementation outcome—one that is relevant to all programs. High levels of participant engagement in programming were associated with

- choosing and adapting curricula to be relevant to participant needs and interests, and framing communication and conflict management skills in terms of their applicability to a variety of interpersonal situations beyond romantic relationships, such as parenting, employer-employee relationships, and relationships with other incarcerated men;
- hiring program staff with the ability to relate to participants as individuals. Sincerity, passion, and credibility based on shared experience were important to successful engagement;
- the program's help (for partners) in overcoming barriers like transportation, child care, and facility access, for shorter and longer programs alike; and
- providing substantial in-house training based on senior staff experience with justice-involved families. Importantly, this training was in addition to the training provided by curriculum developers and correctional or domestic violence agency partners because it developed the capacity of staff to work effectively and appropriately with families without burning out.

Change in Relationship Status

Couples appeared more likely to end their relationships in the period immediately after release than during other points in their program participation, and those whose relationships ended did not wish to maintain contact with a relationship-strengthening program.

Competing Demands

Released men faced intense, competing demands during the period immediately after release, with the need for employment typically ranking foremost; therefore, anything that participants did not perceive as helping them to obtain employment was likely to be sidelined during the post-release period.

Keys to Post-Release Retention

Participants and staff at several sites suggested that post-release program retention was more likely among couples with whom the program had established a strong prior track record of responsiveness. They stressed that retention in the program was most likely when staff had attended to participants' immediate needs related to child support, housing, or employment before their release. Several sites enrolled released men and their partners in relationship education seminars. Program staff drew on relationships with other agencies with which the prospective participants were already involved, such as probation offices or residential service providers. Rather than requiring an extended commitment, couples were invited to participate in short, intensive seminars.

6.6 SECTION SUMMARY

All grantees were required to develop a domestic violence protocol. Grantees implemented diverse approaches to screening for domestic violence, responding to individuals identified as being at risk for domestic violence, and providing domestic violence education and individualized supports during participation. Most grantees used either correctional data or self-reported information to screen for domestic violence. Two sites referred prospective participants, once screened, for a full clinical assessment by an outside provider; one site conducted an in-house clinical assessment. All grantees providing couples-based classes excluded couples in which either partner reported a current restraining order that would prohibit one of them from contact with the other. Two grantees referred participants who met clinical assessment criteria for domestic violence perpetration to a 25- or 26-week batterer intervention course. Other grantees incorporated brief educational content on domestic violence into regular program activities.

Many grantees adapted their curricula to ensure relevance to the target population. Adaptations included modifying the content of relationship education courses, adapting language and examples to increase comprehension and better engage participants in the courses, and adapting the delivery style to maintain interest and make concepts accessible.

In several sites, modifications to grantees' program operations based on participant feedback were made to strengthen the program and keep participants engaged. Changes guided by participant feedback in these sites included adding new services to address emerging needs among participants, modifying the curricula and providing supplemental staff training.

Staffing and management strategies perceived as effective by grantees included hiring staff with the ability to relate personally to the target population as well as the ability to adhere to the conditions required by the correctional institution; preventing and managing staff turnover by cross training staff and training a large pool of course facilitators; and managing service delivery in multiple institutions by building strong personal relationships with facility staff, cultivating a positive organizational reputation, adhering to facility-specific regulations, and maintaining frequent communication.

Keeping participants engaged in programming (particularly partners and men who were released after enrollment) was a challenge for many grantees. Grantees implemented many strategies to encourage participants to engage fully and complete program components. The most effective strategies appeared to be hiring staff with the necessary qualities noted above; providing substantial in-house training based on senior staff experience with justice-involved families; choosing relevant, appropriate curricula; having staff use learner-centered facilitation techniques; and following through on promises to participants.

SECTION 7 Looking Ahead: Grantees' Assessments of Their Achievements and Post-Funding Sustainability

During the final evaluation site visits, we asked grantees to reflect on their program successes and identify the major lessons they learned in implementing their MFS-IP programs. Grantees were also contacted by phone one year after the end of the grant period to discuss the status of the programs and their impressions of the legacy of these programs for their organizations and communities.

In this section, we discuss grantees' perceptions about the success of their programs, along with grantees' suggestions for making their programs more effective. In addition, we present grantees' plans for and actual experiences of sustaining and adapting MFS-IP programming.

7.1 PERCEPTIONS ABOUT WHAT WORKED IN MFS-IP

Grantee Perspectives: Most Effective Program Components

- Services that provided opportunities for contact between fathers and their children
- Services that addressed participants' employment needs
- Holistic programming that facilitated all aspects of reentry and supported partners

During interviews with key stakeholders at the MFS-IP sites, grantees talked about the extent to which their program goals were met. We asked them to describe their key achievements and the factors that made the achievements possible. Respondents also covered lessons learned regarding their most engaging program components and the characteristics of families that appeared to derive the most substantial benefits from their programming.

When the MFS-IP grantees reflected on whether their program goals were achieved, most respondents asserted that many of them were. Some grantees noted that it was still too soon to assess the long-term success of participating families and a reduction in stigma for families affected by incarceration.

However, all grantees pointed to specific achievements that they facilitated for the families they served, including

- helping participants reconnect with their partners and families;
- supporting stability among vulnerable families by teaching them the skills to sustain healthy relationships;

- giving both men and women an opportunity to build or rebuild their support systems;
- helping participants understand themselves better and work through some of the impact of their past behavior on their families;
- improving communication skills among incarcerated men, which resulted in improved relationships with their family members and other incarcerated men; and
- increasing the well-being of children through the fathers' communication with the children's mothers, timely child support payments after release, and quality time between fathers and their children.

In addition, some grantees highlighted their implementation successes, including improving their relationships with state correctional agencies; gaining approval from facilities to deliver programming, expand into new facilities, and bring partners into facilities; adapting their programs to accommodate men without partners; overcoming geographic barriers to serve men incarcerated in remote facilities and partners who lived in rural areas; and identifying community resources to help returning prisoners with reentry issues.

Grantee Perspectives: What Was the Legacy of MFS-IP Programs?

During the course of their grants, program directors observed a positive shift in attitudes held by both community and correctional agencies with regard to the importance of family-strengthening work among families affected by incarceration. This shift was attributed to their programs' visible success and their effectiveness at "selling" the work.

One year after their MFS-IP grants ended, program leaders described a lasting impact of the initiative on their own work, their organizations, and their communities. As a result of MFS-IP implementation, grantees observed

- ► more recognition among state correctional administrators and state prison staff of the importance of family relationships in reentry;
- ► more competence and familiarity on the part of community organizations in serving reentering men and their families;
- ► enduring partnerships, particularly between corrections and community agencies, and also among community agencies specializing in prison-based service delivery and those specializing in community-based service delivery; and
- ► the initiation or strengthening of community-wide reentry councils or other interagency coordination efforts.

7.2 LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT PROGRAM FOCUS AND MOST EFFECTIVE COMPONENTS

Contact with children was a key aspect of the MFS-IP programming that motivated men's participation and helped them make changes in their lives. Programs that included special visitation services generally identified them as the most successful program component.

Staff noted that child-friendly visitation sessions and video visits were very popular, and one grantee noted that giving men the opportunity to engage with their children in this way motivated many of them to participate in earnest in the other program components.

Staff from one program observed that the opportunity for special visitation complemented the parenting and relationship skills building that took place in the courses offered. Clients echoed the importance of program components that facilitated contact with their children. One MFS-IP participant observed that video visits allowed him to practice the skills he learned during parenting classes. Another noted that child-friendly visitation was a strong motivator for ongoing participation in other aspects of the program.

Grantee Perspective: How Might Sentence Length Affect the Benefits Received from Programming?

Several program staff commented on the perceived influence of sentence length on participants' attitudes toward MFS-IP programming. Most of these interviewees felt that couples in which the man had been incarcerated longer had a greater appreciation for the programming (and for each other). One interviewee noted that men in higher-security facilities seemed to get more out of programming because they had spent enough time inside to appreciate the programming. In addition, this staff member observed that men in higher-security facilities had a greater appreciation of the consequences of their behavior and did not want to jeopardize their or their peers' opportunity to participate in programming.

However, one grantee staff member argued in favor of serving men incarcerated for shorter periods of time. This interviewee felt that targeting services to those incarcerated for shorter periods had a greater impact, because their relationships tended to still be intact (in contrast to men who had been incarcerated for 10 or more years and whose partners had already moved on).

Several grantee staff members reported that participants were most engaged in program components that addressed their employment needs, including assistance in locating jobs and building skills. Program participants confirmed that economic stability activities, including job skills, employment assistance, and financial literacy, were helpful long-term parts of the program, and believed that these activities would help them the most upon release. One interviewee strongly felt that providing family-strengthening skills without supporting men in finding work after release would make a program less relevant to families and curtail its potential for facilitating real transformation in their lives.

Other grantees emphasized the need for holistic family-strengthening programs. Several grantees perceived facilitating all aspects of reentry as critical. Case managers from one of the holistic, case management-based programs felt that establishing hope in the participants was the most important thing the program did to help them. Helping the men define their goals well before release and being available to support the partners were also perceived as critical. Other key areas of assistance cited included supporting families with

housing, helping participants identify the relationships and situations they need to avoid, and facilitating realistic expectations for reentry.

7.3 LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT THE FAMILIES THAT BENEFITED THE MOST FROM PROGRAMMING

Grantee Perspective: Increasing the Effectiveness of Future Programs

- ► Shift focus from couples to families, and define family more broadly.
- ► Work with incarcerated mothers as well as fathers.
- ► Take advantage of other programs' experience to identify a feasible program model as early in the planning as possible.
- ► Ensure that the primary needs of participants are met, primarily job placement assistance.
- ► Increase focus on post-release services.

Given the range of families served across the sites, we asked grantees what lessons they learned regarding the families that appeared to derive the most benefits from program participation. The majority of respondents felt that the couples who benefited most were those who were already in stable, low-conflict relationships and who were committed to their relationships. Grantees observed that the level of a couple's commitment to each other and their children strongly influenced the benefit they derived from participating in the program. Indicators of stability and commitment included the extent to which the partner communicated with and visited the man while he was incarcerated. In addition, older couples who had been together longer were perceived to be more committed and therefore more receptive to the program. One staff member suggested that younger couples were driven more by the chance to see their partners for an extended period of time than by the desire to work on their relationships. In addition, younger men were perceived to be less ready to make changes in their lives than older men.

Despite the general tendency to report that more committed couples benefited the most from the programming, several staff members strongly believed that any couple had the potential to derive some benefit. Indeed, one staff member felt that couples who were on the edge of separating actually benefited the most. Similarly, another interviewee felt that couples with more serious issues tended to be more open minded about receiving relationship-strengthening courses. Some staff had observed divorced couples trying to work out their relationship issues through the couples retreats. In addition, with respect to the age pattern noted above, one staff member asserted that younger couples still got a lot out of the program, even though many appeared to still be trying to get to know one another.

7.4 GRANTEE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF FAMILY-STRENGTHENING PROGRAMMING

In addition to reflecting on what appeared to work well for grantees, site staff were also asked to think about what would have made their programs more successful along a variety

of dimensions, including program design, service delivery, federal oversight and grant requirements.

Grantees' thoughts about program design and implementation strategies that may have resulted in greater success are categorized into

- expanding eligibility,
- starting with a strong design,
- integrating healthy relationships and parenting components,
- adding more services, and
- delivering planned services effectively.

7.4.1 Expanding Eligibility

Most grantees thought broadening the definition of "family" would have increased their programs' effectiveness. Almost all grantees felt that their programs could have made a wider impact if they had been permitted to offer their services to populations beyond those to whom participation was limited based on the legislative requirements of the OFA grants (see **Section 1**). Most importantly, grantees felt that "family" should be defined more broadly for this type of program to have more of an impact. Their ideas for refocusing eligibility criteria for family-strengthening services for this population included

- asking each incarcerated enrollee to identify the family members who would play an important role during his/her incarceration and reentry and serving those family members, and
- treating each child of an incarcerated parent as the center of a family unit and serving any adults who are involved in raising that child.

In addition to redefining "family," the second most commonly reported factor that grantees felt would have made their programs more effective (had there been no legislatively driven grant restrictions) was being able to offer the program to incarcerated women and their families. One grantee noted that incarcerated women could benefit from responsible parenting programs, and another felt that the couples' healthy-relationship retreats would be effective for incarcerated women and their partners.

A few interviewees initiated comments about the widespread correctional practice of excluding all sex offenders from family-oriented programming. For example, one interviewee felt that it was appropriate to accept sex offenders on a case-by-case basis, depending on the charge (for example, a statutory offense versus an assault).

7.4.2 Starting with a Strong Design

Many grantees identified specific program components or approaches that they wished they had developed earlier, including the dads-only classes and a distance-learning approach to reach partners. Although this learning curve was undoubtedly beneficial to grantees in

understanding the pitfalls of certain approaches, many grantees wished they had not had to learn these lessons firsthand. One grantee indicated that, for future programs, it would be effective to begin with a menu of possible program models up front, with grantees selecting from among these models. Another grantee felt that before any design work, programs should spend a substantial amount of time identifying what is going on in their communities and meeting with a broad spectrum of key players.

Grantee Perspectives: Timing of Service Delivery

Some grantees felt that they would have been more successful if they had reconceptualized their service point of entry. Two grantees noted that they would have liked to enroll men upon admission to the correctional system. At this point, relationships are still relatively intact for many families. In both of these sites, however, grantees also recognized the value in serving men who were approaching release. For these men, staff could play a key role in preparing families for the transition into the community.

Holistic Approach

Several grantees felt that their experiences had taught them or confirmed to them the necessity of a holistic approach in serving their target families. One grantee observed that structured skill-building sessions—which were the primary services delivered among MFS-IP grantees—are not all that families affected by incarceration need. Other grantees felt that holistic programming within a faith- or character-based framework facilitated stronger retention in programming and better supported personal transformation among participants. One grantee noted that, even if holistic programs with an intensive approach served fewer families than curriculum-based programs, the trade-off was worth it in terms of the impact the programs might achieve.

Employment and Substance Abuse Treatment Services

Many grantee staff and program stakeholders believed that, to be successful, future programs need to address key needs such as employment and substance abuse alongside family strengthening. The need for incorporating employment assistance in programming for strengthening families was echoed by several grantees. As stated previously, employment was such an overriding concern for men upon release that programming that did not address it could be perceived as irrelevant. Similarly, the influence of addiction on reentry success was perceived to be so strong that substance abuse treatment was identified as a core program component by one grantee.

Post-Release Services

Programs that did not have a major post-release component generally felt that their programs would have been more effective if they had been successful in including these services. For several grantees, this would have meant partnering with community-based organizations to deliver post-release services. Staff from two sites felt that their agencies were well positioned to focus on prison-based services and that having a community-based organization deliver community services would have been ideal. Another grantee noted that

a companion program for justice system–involved men in the community would have complemented its facility-based programming.

Individual Assessment

Staff from one grantee agency noted that, because men with mental health needs, substance abuse issues, and tendencies toward violence needed to be served differently (and sometimes separately) from men without these issues, it was important to identify these needs through an individual assessment. Interviewees recommended assessing participants early, offering special discussion groups for men with substance abuse issues and anger problems, and making sure those with mental health needs were connected with mental health treatment services while they were participating in family strengthening.

7.4.3 Integrating Parenting and Healthy Relationship Programming

Interviewees were asked about the best approach for integrating parenting and healthy relationship programming for justice-involved couples. Nearly all grantees provided both of these components (although parenting classes were offered to female partners in only two sites). First, most grantees felt that relationship-strengthening and parenting components were complementary. One grantee observed that the skills and insights that make for positive parenting are similar to those that create positive partnerships, such as trust, sensitivity, communication, and insight into the ways that substance abuse and domestic violence affect one's family members.

Second, with respect to the ordering of the two components, grantees were evenly divided regarding which should come first. Some grantees felt that it was critical to deliver parenting classes first. These grantees emphasized that the parenting component was what initially motivated many participants to participate in family-strengthening programs (as discussed in previous sections). Furthermore, these grantees pointed out that parenting-related program activities taught skills with broader relevance (e.g., tuning into and talking about feelings, distinguishing feelings from thoughts) and laid the foundation for the atmosphere of trust that was necessary for the more emotionally intense healthy relationship activities that followed. However, other grantees felt that because healthy relationship classes teach communication skills, it was essential for relationship classes to provide the foundation for subsequent parenting components. These respondents felt that it was important to strengthen the relationship between partners first and provide tools for them to make decisions together about their children. The few grantees that offered parenting classes to both men and women were not certain that the parenting and healthy-relationship classes even needed to be taught separately, although they noted that their current approach seemed to be working.

The third set of recommendations pertained to providing healthy-relationship services to couples. Most grantees felt that it was ideal to serve couples jointly or at least bring them together for a joint class upon the man's release after having received the classes separately. However, some pointed out that what was more important was to ensure that the men and women receive the classes at roughly the same time (i.e., without a major

time lapse) to make sure that couples shared similar values with respect to communication. In addition, most grantees felt that the skills taught would be useful to all men, even if they could not use them with partners in the immediate future. One site that included couples and individual men in the same class (RIDGE [OH]) felt that it was advantageous to have this mix because men without partners could learn from the couples and witness the progress they made.

7.4.4 Adding More Services

Grantees identified several services that they thought would have made their programs more successful at helping the enrolled families. These services are listed in **Table 7-1** based on the frequency with which they were mentioned by grantees. Some of the services listed in the table represent enhancements grantees would like to make to existing services, whereas others represent additional services grantees might have offered given more resources or program designs that allowed them to offer them with existing resources.

Table 7-1. Additional Services Grantees Would Have Liked to Include

Additional Services	Sites Suggesting
Employment, including job placement and referral assistance, readiness/training	5
Housing, including transitional housing, start-up financial assistance, and emergency funds for housing	3
Refresher healthy-relationship course	2
Family reentry or transitional assistance (individual pre-release preparation sessions, transitional conferencing for couples in which the incarcerated partner is approaching release or newly released, intensive transitional care as the men are released)	2
Post-release case management	2
Support groups and other community-based activities for partners	2
Spirituality and faith-based components	2
Domestic violence services	2
Thorough needs assessment and intensive case management	1
Visitation coaching for incarcerated parents, their children and coparents	1
Post-release counseling	1
Emergency funds	1
Financial education and money management	1
Substance abuse treatment	1
Transportation assistance	1
Life skills and other self-help classes	1
Empowerment classes	1
Child welfare services	1
Other direct work with children	1
Health services	1

Grantees most frequently identified employment and housing as desired additional services. As noted previously, many grantees recognized the tremendous need for employment assistance among men upon release and wished they could have done more in this area. Grantees felt that employment assistance would have helped strengthen the economic stability of the families and kept them engaged in other aspects of the site's programming. Representatives from one grantee felt that it would have been effective for their program to have identified a job coordinator to handle employment-related needs. Several grantees expressed the need to engage in active work with prospective employers. Grantees also expressed a desire to offer more housing-related support. Some staff noted that clients struggled with eviction or lacked the start-up funds necessary for housing and that financial assistance for housing, as well as more options for transitional housing, were critical.

7.4.5 Delivering Planned Services Effectively

Grantees also offered specific suggestions to future program implementers for delivering services in a more effective manner. The suggestions, which are listed in **Table 7-2**, primarily related to building relationships with clients and ensuring the relevance of the programming. Others related to working with prisons and community partners.

7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDING AND GRANT MONITORING

Grantee Perspectives: Recommendations for Funding and Grant Monitoring

- ► Increase funding levels and duration to allow for more staff and services.
- ► Provide early and consistent clarification on grant goals and requirements.
- ► Provide additional technical assistance—particularly peer-to-peer contact—on topics such as program design and sustainability planning.

In addition to their own design and implementation efforts, grantees offered thoughts about how legislatively based grant requirements and federal oversight influenced their success. Not surprisingly, several grantees noted that additional funding would have enabled them to be more successful by increasing their staff capacity and allowing them to offer more services to families. Some grantees noted that long-term funding would have allowed more flexibility for staff and clients. In addition, one grantee felt that the focus on enrollment and completion numbers was not appropriate for demonstration grants and may have hurt their program.

Several grantees noted that expectations regarding the relative emphasis on fatherhood work versus relationship-strengthening work were unclear and inconsistent, which decreased their efficiency during the start-up period. In addition, some grantees felt that their relationships with the correctional facilities were strained when they had to alter services to meet this perceived shifting target. Overall, many grantees felt that more clarity from the beginning regarding goals and requirements would have increased their chances of success and allowed them to put in place systems that would enable them to provide information that OFA would require later on, such as mandatory performance measures.

Other areas in which guidance was perceived as unclear included whether counseling could be paid for with grant funds, whether programming could be provided to men without partners, and what activities met the changing definition of "served."

Table 7-2. Service Delivery Strategies Recommended by Grantees

Building Relationships with Clients
• Be open to different family structures and definitions of family. • Begin developing relationships with clients as early in programming as possible. • Create safe opportunities for participants to share with each other through an emphasis on community building. • Share your own experiences rather than preach. • Really respond to what participants say and believe them. • Take participants' opinions seriously. • Break participants into assigned groups for discussion-based activities to build their familiarity and comfort with one another. • Create a non-punitive environment with services delivered by non-correctional staff.
Ensuring the Relevance of the Programming
• Focus on issues and skills specific to incarceration during the incarceration (e.g., provide participants with relationship and parenting skills they can put to use during the incarceration, not just after release). • Select a relationship education curriculum designed for incarcerated men. • Get rid of content and exercises not relevant to the prison context. • Before bringing a couple together for programming, find out what is working and not working in the relationship from the perspective of each partner. • Use "real talk," speak honestly and candidly, share your personal experiences, and treat participants with respect. • Use visual aids to which men can relate; expose participants to movie clips or other visual media that help them to see themselves in the course content and inspire them to reflect on their own lives. • Obtain actual family correspondence from former participants to share as examples for the unit on male-female communication. • Focus on verbal abuse when educating participants about domestic violence (because physical abuse was not perceived as relevant during incarceration).
Working with Prisons
• Be flexible enough to adapt the program based on experience and the changing prison environment. • Plan all activities as far in advance as possible to allow time for background clearances and administrative approvals. • Have a consistent staff presence inside the prison and always be where you say you will be. • Provide program staff with excellent training on working within the prison environment and on representing the program to prison staff.
Working with Community Partners
• Build a wide network of community partners with aligned missions so that participants can be referred to partner agencies that share a common philosophy and will follow through with clients. • Rather than contracting with an outside agency to hire and supervise course facilitators, simplify staff oversight by hiring grantee agency staff to fill this role. • Provide mental health services in house, rather than referring clients to outside agencies.

In addition to stable and clear guidance on expectations, a few grantees felt that some of the legislatively based restrictions on their funding hindered their effectiveness. As noted previously, several grantees felt that they would have been more effective if they could have served incarcerated women.

Grantee Perspectives: Recommendations for Local Evaluation

Several grantees mentioned that additional technical assistance on evaluation design would have been helpful in maximizing the success of local evaluation efforts. One grantee also observed that knowing the outcomes that OFA was most interested in would have facilitated their local evaluation efforts.

Grantees were asked what they would have done differently with their local evaluation efforts if they had the opportunity to redesign them. Suggestions included

- ► assessing longer-term impacts by obtaining longitudinal data and following respondents for a period of time after program participation;
- ► being able to access more quantitative data and interviewing participants while they were incarcerated;
- ► focusing less on interviews with men and exploring other data sources (e.g., writing assignments, diaries) that might supply information that the interviews were not able to gather;
- ► not using the PREP pre/post tests, which might not adequately measure change over a short period of time;
- ► measuring the fidelity of courses implemented; and
- ► validating the outcomes used.

Finally, several grantees felt that additional and earlier technical assistance, including peer-to-peer training, would have helped them serve families more effectively.[15] Areas that were mentioned included evaluation design; program troubleshooting; sustainability planning; and training on implementing the reporting requirements, which grantees suggested changed several times.

7.6 SUSTAINABILITY OF MFS-IP PROGRAMS

Most MFS-IP grantees planned to continue family-strengthening work with families affected by incarceration, and several stated that this work was central to their agency's mission. Grantees' strategies for continuing the work begun with MFS-IP funding are discussed below.

7.6.1 Efforts to Secure Extramural Funding

Nearly all grantees reported being actively involved in grant writing to pursue extramural funding for the continuation of some or all of their MFS-IP programs. They sought funding from

- federal government (e.g., U.S. Department of Justice and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services),
- state government,

[15] Grantees were free to request technical assistance on this and other issues, but this evaluation did not collect information on such requests nor the quality of the technical assistance provided.

- private foundations (e.g., Annie E. Casey, Robert Wood Johnson),
- local churches, and
- other private donors.

Some grantees reported engaging in new partnerships that could position them advantageously for grant proposals. For example, IDOC (IN) administrators were working to develop partnerships with other state agencies so that they would be well positioned to pursue federal funding opportunities that arose.

Where Were the MFS-IP Grantees One Year Later?

All 12 MFS-IP grantees were re-contacted in fall 2012, one year after the end of their 2006-2011 OFA grants.

- ► Three former MFS-IP grantees (SD, NJ, OH) continued their programs with funding from OFA's Community-Centered Responsible Fatherhood Ex-Prisoner Reentry Pilot initiative. All three programs retained their core MFS-IP services, increased their focus on meeting men's post-release needs, and dropped or lessened their focus on couples-based services and services for female partners.
- ► Two (MI, TN) continued their programs with funding from OFA's Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood initiative. Both retained their MFS-IP service delivery approaches and added more employment-related activities. MI added economic education and dropped couples-based relationship education.
- ► One (MD) continued all of its MFS-IP services with support from the county department of human services, adding additional housing and child support–related services.
- ► Three (IN, NY, NH) offered aspects of their MFS-IP programs (e.g., parenting and relationship education, video visiting, child-friendly visitation) with support from their state departments of correction. Correctional system support was supplemented with support from other local funding sources.
- ► Two (CA, MN) continued to provide some of their MFS-IP services on a smaller scale via local public and private foundation funders.
- ► Former staff at one grantee agency (TXPOP) could not be reached.

In addition to specific grant opportunities, some grantees worked to secure funding through state budget agreements. Several grantees reported negotiating with their state correctional agencies to have the grantee agency funded to provide some of its MFS-IP programming in the prisons. For example, LSSSD was under consideration by the South Dakota Department of Corrections to provide state prisons with the domestic violence programming it developed through MFS-IP funding. Similarly, Osborne (NY) hoped to continue the state-funded portion of its FamilyWorks program, and MNCCJ expected to continue receiving funding for the delivery of its prison-based parenting classes. CFSNH anticipated that some of the duties currently funded by the grant could be absorbed by the New Hampshire Department of Corrections. Similarly, MDDHR reported that the Prince

George's and Montgomery County governments might continue to support the program coordinator positions and they expected to continue the programming in some form. Finally, OLHSA (MI) reported that it was working to codify the funding for its MFS-IP program so that it could be a permanent part of the state budget.

Grantee Perspectives: Strategies for Sustaining Programs

- To reduce program costs, deliver programs using community-based volunteers or trained program graduates rather than professional facilitators.
- Institutionalize programs by incorporating them into local department of corrections policies.
- Identify additional partners to provide some services.
- Use creative means to generate program revenue.

Several grantees reported using findings from their local evaluations to increase support for their programs and improve their chances of receiving extramural funding. These grantees recognized a need to highlight statistics that demonstrate success. Some grantees noted that to receive additional support from the state, it was critical for them to show reductions in recidivism. Program administrators from IDOC (IN) pointed out that showing improvements in incarcerated participants' conduct was also an important objective. Finally, several grantees noted that identifying the economic impact of the program was helpful in securing more funding.

Another strategy for increasing support for the continuation of grantees' programs was developing marketing materials. Administrators of the TXPOP program created marketing materials that highlighted the potential cost savings of the program to taxpayers. These materials stated that if all 400 men who attended their couples retreat were released and were not reincarcerated within the next four years, Texas taxpayers would save $50 million, including the costs of incarceration and welfare to support their families.

7.6.2 Other Sustainability Strategies

In addition to increasing interest in, and financial support for, their family-strengthening work among families affected by incarceration, MFS-IP grantees engaged in several additional strategies to sustain their programs.

Delivering programming through means other than professional facilitators was a strategy under consideration or already being implemented in four sites. Both IDOC (IN) and RIDGE (OH) had already begun involving community-based volunteers to facilitate relationship education courses. In both of these sites, volunteers were trained in administering the program materials and administered sections of the relationship-education courses along with paid program staff. TXPOP was also considering relying solely on volunteer labor to continue its program. In addition to the volunteer approach, RIDGE (OH) and Osborne (NY) expressed strong interest in training program graduates who were still incarcerated to facilitate relationship education courses in the prisons at which they were incarcerated. Importantly, the men would be paid to facilitate the courses or at least have a stipend provided directly to their families. Furthermore, staff from Osborne (NY) suggested that the

men would receive college credit for the training received in preparation to teach the classes. As noted in **Section 4**, Osborne (NY) already involved program graduates as assistants to facilitators. Peer leadership was similarly envisioned as a critical component of RIDGE (OH)'s program and a key sustainability strategy. Through the establishment of independent Tyros (peer leadership organization) chapters at individual facilities and in the community, RIDGE administrators envisioned that family-strengthening services would continue to be delivered through the Tyros efforts. It was expected that chapters would engage in fundraising, bring in speakers, and set up their own programs, and RIDGE staff would oversee the chapters and conduct periodic site visits to assist.

Closely related to the use of volunteers and paid program graduates are other cost-saving strategies envisioned by two grantees that planned to continue their programs after the OFA grant ended. TXPOP and IDOC (IN) both intended to continue providing the couples retreats one way or another. Staff from both sites reported that having partners pay for their own lodging and meals might enable them to continue offering the retreats (although TXPOP would also likely have to rely only on volunteers as facilitators). TXPOP was also evaluating the feasibility of converting their program to an online seminar. Given the high cost of developer-delivered facilitator training on the PREP curriculum, another grantee indicated that, regardless of whether the facilitators were volunteers, the "PREP facilitator" approach was too expensive for the state (or private funding) to sustain.

Challenges to Sustainability

At the state level, budget shortfalls resulted in frozen positions, layoffs, and cuts for staff. These challenges influenced MFS-IP grantees' sustainability efforts because many states were asked to cut existing programs, and few were looking to add new ones. Staff from one state noted that in previous years, successful grant-funded programs at the correctional agency were typically picked up by the department after funding ended; however, with state budget cuts and a climate of layoffs and outsourcing at the time the MFS-IP grants were ending, that was no longer the case.

It was also noted that efforts to secure continuing funding were hurt by negative public perceptions of investments in individuals involved in the criminal justice system during an economic downturn. During such times, many individuals without a criminal history are also in acute need of assistance. Even under better economic conditions, some grantees emphasized the lack of concern for adult corrections populations—particularly among private donors. In addition, one grantee that served both the parole/probation population and incarcerated populations noted that it was extremely difficult to generate interest in the former group.

Grantee staff and stakeholders suggested that policy changes might also facilitate IDOC (IN)'s efforts to continue its program. This grantee was able to institutionalize its program through departmental policy. In year three, IDOC (IN) wrote an administrative policy and procedure memo that established that the IDOC would provide responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage programming. The memo also specified the goals, criteria, and roles of key staff.

Sustaining services through partnerships was a strategy mentioned by a few grantees. Administrators of the MNCCJ program reported that the site was working on identifying other partners that could provide some of the services provided by the MFS-IP case advocates. This strategy appeared to be focused on continuing to serve families already enrolled in the MFS-IP program rather than on sustaining long-term service delivery.

Grantees mentioned other strategies that focused on generating revenue for program funding. The founders of RIDGE (OH) suggested developing a toolkit that other organizations could purchase to duplicate their efforts. Administrators of the IDOC (IN) program used food sales (in prisons) to raise funds for curricula. Finally, one grantee proposed exploring a fee-for-service model so that it could continue delivering services to enrolled families.

Evaluation Perspectives: What Made Programs More Likely to Be Sustained?

Sustainability is a widely recognized implementation outcome and one that is relevant to most grant-funded programs. At the end of federal funding, MFS-IP grantees remained committed to strengthening family relationships among families separated by incarceration. One year after the MFS-IP grants ended, several grantees maintained at least some program activities initiated under the grant, although few sustained a specific focus on couples-based service delivery. Several characteristics made it easier for some grantees without ongoing federal funding to continue offering MFS-IP services:

- Programs that brought substantial prior experience (and a mission focus) in delivering family-oriented services to justice-involved families were able to incorporate MFS-IP program components into other, related programs.
- The MFS-IP program model in place at some sites lent itself to "scaling down" to lower funding levels. For example, programs that used a curriculum-driven, rather than more resource-intense, approach were in a better position to sustain their programs in the absence of federal funding.
- Programs that built a strong reputation inside the correctional institutions where they operated found that stakeholders chose to fund continued programming rather than see it disappear.

7.7 SECTION SUMMARY

Most grantees felt that they had achieved many of the goals of their MFS-IP programs, and identified partnerships with the correctional agency and host facilities as instrumental in their success. Flexibility and resourcefulness in addressing barriers were also identified as being critical for achieving goals.

Almost all grantees felt that their programs could have had more of an impact if they had been able to offer their services to populations beyond those to whom participation was limited based on the legislative requirements that guided the MFS-IP grants. In addition, many felt that offering more holistic programming, including employment and housing assistance, could have allowed them to better serve the targeted families.

Most grantees planned to continue family strengthening work with families affected by incarceration, and several had taken concrete steps toward continuing specific MFS-IP program components. One year after the MFS-IP grants ended, 11 of the 12 grantees were continuing to offer at least some components of their MFS-IP program. Several characteristics supported the continuation of MFS-IP services without federal funding: 1) a low-intensity, group-based service delivery model that could be scaled down for inexpensive delivery by volunteers or staff paid through other funding; 2) an organizational mission to serve justice-involved families or a pre-grant history of providing such services; and 3) a very strong reputation at all levels within the correctional institutions where grantees delivered services.

SECTION

8 Conclusion: Key Lessons from the Implementation Study of MFS-IP Programs

The MFS-IP initiative represented a groundbreaking effort to recognize and respond to the impact of incarceration on families and the crucial role of family support in reentry success. It brought together practitioners from several fields that had not historically collaborated—including corrections, human services, and domestic violence agencies—in support of healthy relationships, positive parenting, and economic stability among families with an incarcerated or reentering parent.

This implementation evaluation documented the diverse program models these grantees undertook and identified the common implementation drivers and implementation processes that shaped MFS-IP grantees' successes and failures in bringing their programs to scale. The efforts of these pioneering practitioners yielded insights that will guide future implementation science and support the Department of Health and Human Services' continued commitment to identifying effective service delivery approaches for parents and children affected by incarceration. A short summary of implementation lessons for policy by McKay and colleagues (2013) is available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/13/MFS-IPImplementation/rpt_mmfsip.html.

8.1 DEFINING A TARGET POPULATION

8.1.1 Importance of Serving Justice-Involved Men and Their Families

The experiences of MFS-IP programs suggest that justice-involved fathers and their families are important targets for family-strengthening services. MFS-IP grantees and their local collaborators shared the view that supporting healthy parent-child and couple relationships among these men was crucial to successful reentry.

8.1.2 Including More Families in Services

MFS-IP programs that defined their program eligibility criteria as broadly as possible within the constraints of the funding initiative were better able to meet enrollment targets. Programs that had planned to impose additional eligibility criteria (such as only serving fathers over 21 or only serving married couples) tended to eliminate these requirements over time, which helped to increase the pool of potential participants from which they could recruit. Grantees with strong enrollment also tended to serve a wider catchment area, including multiple prison facilities or multiple community venues.

Some program staff noted that the initiative's specific focus on spouses and romantic partners limited its potential reach. They described the complexity of incarcerated men's family structures and the importance of other family members (such as men's mothers) in supporting them and their children during a period of incarceration. Organizations that continued to deliver family strengthening services to justice-involved men after the initial grant period ended often dropped the requirement for a spouse or committed romantic partner's participation in favor of serving more men. Others speculated that including additional family members, such as grandparents or coparents who are no longer romantically involved, could help make the family-based service delivery model relevant to more families (such as those that do not include two parents in a stable romantic relationship).

8.2 DESIGNING A PROGRAM THAT MEETS PARTICIPANTS' NEEDS

8.2.1 Reframing "Healthy Marriage"

Among the couples targeted by MFS-IP programs, relationships were often tenuous and competing time commitments (particularly for women in the community) were overwhelming. Engaging them in healthy marriage programming proved challenging.

Some couples in the target population, but not all, found the program's intended focus on supporting healthy marriage appealing. To increase the perceived relevance of this support, programs often used the term "relationship" instead of "marriage," stressed the benefits of program participation to the couple's children (rather than the benefits to their own relationship), and suggested that stronger relationship skills would be useful in a variety of interpersonal relationships (e.g., parent-child, coparent, employer-employee) besides the focal romantic partnership.

8.2.2 Providing Other Relevant Supports

To hold participants' interest in family strengthening at a time of distress and acute material need, successful grantees designed their programs to meet a variety of more salient needs, such as maintaining contact during incarceration, building parenting skills, and helping men prepare for and find post-release employment. The prospect of help with child support order modifications, housing placement, and public benefits applications also resonated with participants.

8.2.3 Delivering Curricula Tailored for Justice-Involved Couples

Grantees chose or developed relationship and parenting education curricula that were designed for justice-involved families, or made adaptations to curricula designed for the general population. These materials focused on relationship skills that were specifically relevant for incarcerated fathers and their partners, such as letter writing, making good use of in-person visit time, or communicating with children about a father's incarceration. They actively sought input from members of the target population during program design and implementation, and tailored their programs accordingly.

8.2.4 Building Genuine Connections with Participants

Staff who showed a personal commitment to the work and who made themselves available to participants outside of formal program activities built better rapport with participants. The involvement of program leaders or staff with relevant life experience or experience working with justice-involved families made a difference. Staff who could share their personal experiences with incarceration or fatherhood, who could genuinely relate to participants, and who fostered strong trust among participants, helped them to build a stronger attachment to the program.

8.2.5 Timing Services Effectively

MFS-IP grantees designed their programs to engage fathers and their partners at various points during the father's incarceration term, including immediately upon prison admission, shortly before release, and shortly after release. Others did not impose such conditions on participation, and served incarcerated men and their partners at any point during the incarceration. Reflecting back on their program designs after the grant period ended, many grantees suggested that it was most effective to begin working with participants early in the incarceration term, when family relationships were more intact and male participants were not consumed with the urgent basic needs that preoccupied them immediately before and after release.

8.2.6 Engaging Participants in the Community

Most programs struggled with initiating or maintaining involvement among men and women living in the community, including female partners living on the outside during the male partner's incarceration, and both members of the couple after the male partner's release.

Realistic expectations for women's participation were essential to engagement. Women were better able to fulfill one-time or short-term commitments (such as a weekend seminar). They often required material help overcoming participation barriers, such as lack of child care or transportation, in order to participate in program activities.

Serving couples after the male partner's release proved even more challenging. Across sites, very few couples engaged in post-release services. Sites that did manage to serve these couples built on a strong rapport developed with both members of the couple during incarceration; offered significant practical assistance with employment, housing and/or child support issues; and often included a focus on faith or character development that seemed to appeal to men interested in making a fresh start after release from prison. A few programs avoided the difficulty of retaining couples through the release transition by enrolling participants after release. These programs often recruited from existing groups of released men receiving other services through the grantee agency or an organizational partner.

8.3 CREATING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

8.3.1 Partnerships with State Departments of Correction and Correctional Facilities

To deliver services inside the state prisons, non-correctional grantee agencies first had to build relationships with state departments of correction. Solidifying partnership agreements with state correctional partners took longer than expected for most community-based grantees. Framing family-strengthening programming in terms of current state-level correctional initiatives (such as reducing recidivism, filling gaps in current program offerings in the prisons, or providing appropriate programming based on risk level assessments) helped to build buy-in from correctional leadership and facility administrators.

For both correctional and non-correctional grantees alike, every aspect of prison-based service delivery had to be negotiated with facility administrators and executed in collaboration with facility line staff. Approval for modifications in protocol was time-consuming to obtain and disseminate. All grantees had to invest substantial attention throughout the grant period in maintaining their welcome at the facility level.

Partnerships with correctional agencies tended to thrive when grantees continually described their programming in terms of correctional system goals and adhered meticulously to agreed-upon schedules, protocols and approval processes.

8.3.2 Partnerships with Community-Based Agencies

Many grantees recruited organizational partners with expertise serving the local communities to which their participants returned after incarceration (and in which many female participants lived during the male partner's incarceration). They saw partnerships with providers of job training and placement assistance, housing, and substance abuse treatment as particularly important. A few also stressed the importance of partnering with local child support enforcement agencies to help men obtain assistance with child support order modification.

MFS-IP grantees leveraged their partnerships to increase the perceived relevance of their services among men and women living in the community. Women living in the community during the male partner's incarceration, as well as couples navigating a recent reentry into the community, had many pressing material needs. By linking participants to other services (or recruiting from an existing group of individuals receiving services from a partner agency), they helped to ensure basic needs were met so that couples could also focus on their family relationships.

Partnerships with community-based agencies succeeded more often when they predated the MFS-IP grant, were actively maintained with frequent communication from the grantee throughout the grant period, or when there was not a long delay between partnership initiation and the first opportunities to jointly serve MFS-IP participants.

8.3.3 Partnerships with Domestic Violence Agencies

OFA required grantees to demonstrate plans to partner with domestic violence organizations or experts. Many of these partnerships never took shape because grantees were unable to successfully address the concerns that their local domestic violence organizations had about providing relationship-strengthening services to justice-involved couples. Grantees who were familiar with the language and values of the domestic violence field, who developed strong interpersonal trust with agency staff, and who were willing to strongly prioritize victim safety in every aspect of programming, built these partnerships in spite of initial difficulties.

Once service delivery began, challenges arose related to a lack of referrals from grantees to domestic violence agency partners, doubt regarding procedures used by grantees to screen for domestic violence risk (which mostly did not identify anyone at risk), and domestic violence agencies' lack of expertise or infrastructure for serving justice-involved couples.

When domestic violence agency partners were involved from the early program design stage, they helped grantees to develop comprehensive domestic violence protocols, effectively serve or refer participants at elevated risk, and incorporate safety considerations throughout their programs—including eligibility criteria, screening and assessment procedures, and service delivery approaches. Partnerships characterized by strong mutual investment withstood the challenges that arose in the course of service delivery.

8.4 BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY AND LONG-TERM IMPACT

8.4.1 Sustaining Innovative Programs

During the OFA funding period, MFS-IP grantees focused their sustainability efforts on the prospect of another federal grant. Five of the 12 agencies did secure funding from OFA for another three years of service delivery through new responsible fatherhood grant priorities that were funded the year the MFS-IP initiative ended.

Several characteristics supported the continuation of MFS-IP services without federal funding among the other grantees: 1) a low-intensity, group-based service delivery model that could be scaled down for inexpensive delivery by volunteers or staff paid through other funding; 2) an organizational mission to serve justice-involved families or a pre-grant history of providing such services; and 3) a very strong reputation at all levels within the correctional institutions where they delivered services.

8.4.2 Perceived Impact of MFS-IP Programs

Stakeholders reported a lasting impact of MFS-IP programs on the communities and institutions in which they were implemented. One year after the grants ended, many of the organizational partnerships between corrections- and community-focused agencies had endured, with partners continuing to communicate and collaborate. Community-wide reentry collaboratives that began or were strengthened as a result of the MFS-IP initiative continued to build membership and momentum.

Stakeholders also cited increased openness and skill among community-based organizations in serving reentering men and their families. State correctional leadership and correctional staff at the facility level evidenced a new willingness to accommodate family-oriented programming in prisons and greater recognition of the importance of family relationships in reentry.

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Appendix

A

Funding Announcement for MFS-IP Initiative

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Program Office:	Office of Family Assistance
Funding Opportunity Title:	Promoting Responsible Fatherhood
Announcement Type:	Initial
Funding Opportunity Number:	HHS-2006-ACF-OFA-FR-0130
CFDA Number:	93.086
Due Date For Letter of Intent:	06/01/2006
Due Date for Applications:	07/03/2006

Executive Summary:

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), announces the availability of competitive grant funds to support Responsible Fatherhood activities. These grants are for innovative, well-designed projects that promote the objectives of the ACF Fatherhood Initiative.

The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (Public Law (P.L.) 109-170) amends Title IV, Section 403(a)(2)(C) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 603(a)(2)) to authorize competitive grants for States, Territories, Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations and Public and Non-Profit Community Entities, including faith-based organizations, to develop and implement projects that support any of the three authorized activity areas: Healthy Marriage, Responsible Parenting, and Economic Stability. The context for these activities is to create an environment that contributes to the well being of children.

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Legislative Authority

The Administration for Children and Families, (ACF), Office of Family Assistance (OFA), announces the availability of competitive grants funds to support Responsible Fatherhood activities. These grants are for innovative, well-designed projects that promote the objectives of the ACF Fatherhood Initiative.

The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-170) amends Title IV, Section 403(a)(2)(C) of the Social Security Act (42.U.S.C. 603(a)(2)) to authorize competitive grants for States, Territories, Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations and Public and Non-Profit Community Entities, including faith-based organizations, to develop and implement projects that support any of the following three authorized activity areas:

1. Healthy Marriage

Activities to promote healthy marriage or sustain marriage, such as:

- Skill-based marriage education;
- Marriage preparation programs;
- Marital inventories;
- Premarital counseling;
- Relationship skill education with a special focus on how good relationship skills help to prepare men and women for healthy marriages;

- Counseling, mentoring and information dissemination about the benefits of marriage and two-parent involvement for children;
- Education regarding how to control aggressive behavior within the context of marriage, with a special focus on reducing and eliminating aggressive behavior and how it can contribute to healthy marriages; and
- Divorce education and reduction programs, including mediation and counseling.

2. Responsible Parenting

Activities to promote responsible parenting, such as:

- Skill-based parenting education;
- Disseminating information about good parenting practices;
- Counseling, mentoring and mediation;
- Disseminating information on the causes of domestic violence and child abuse; and
- Encouraging child support payments.

3. Economic Stability

Activities to foster economic stability, such as:

- Helping fathers improve their economic status by providing activities, such as Work First services, job search, job training, subsidized employment, job retention and job enhancement; and encouraging education, including career-advancement education;
- Coordinating with existing employment services, such as welfare-to-work programs, referrals to local employment training initiatives;
- Disseminating employment materials; and
- Offering financial planning seminars, including those that improve a family's ability to effectively manage family business affairs through education, counseling, or mentoring on matters related to family finances, including household management, budgeting, banking and handling of financial transactions and home maintenance.

Applicants will be required to provide a ten percent cost share of the total approved project cost. The required cost share may be cash or in-kind. Eligible applicants may submit one or more applications in response to this announcement. This program announcement has five priority areas:

1. Responsible Fatherhood Multiple Activity Grants, Level 1
2. Responsible Fatherhood Multiple Activity Grants, Level 2
3. Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grants, Level 1
4. Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grants, Level 2
5. Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners

Applications in each priority area will be evaluated against the criteria set forth in this program announcement. In general, eligible organizations are States, Territories, Indian Tribes and Tribal Organizations, and public and non-profit community entities, including faith-based organizations.

A faith-based organization is eligible to apply for, and to receive a grant on the same basis as any other private organization, with respect to programs for which such other organizations are eligible. In the selection of a grantee, ACF shall not discriminate for or

against a private organization on the basis of the organization's religious character or affiliation. A faith-based organization that is eligible for and receives a grant may retain its independence, autonomy, right of expression, religious character, and authority over its governance. However, direct Federal grants, or sub-awards under this grant announcement shall not be used to support inherently religious activities such as religious instruction, worship, or proselytization. Therefore, if applicable, organizations must take steps to separate, in time or location, their inherently religious activities from the grant funded services.

Background:

While society has overwhelmingly viewed mothers as essential to the well-being of their children, fathers are also vital to the well-being of their children. Research findings indicate that children who live with their biological fathers are, on average, at least two to three times more likely not to be poor, less likely to use drugs, less likely to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, less likely to be victims of child abuse, and less likely to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live without their married, biological (or adoptive) parents. These differences are observed even after controlling for socioeconomic variables such as race and income.

Clearly, fathers make unique and irreplaceable contributions to the lives of their children. Involved fathers provide practical support in raising children and serve as models for their development. Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior compared to children who have uninvolved fathers. Committed and responsible fathering during infancy and early childhood contributes to emotional security, curiosity, and math and verbal skills.

Yet, nearly 20 million children (27 percent) live in single-parent homes. For the first time in our nation's history, more than half of our children will spend a significant portion of their childhood living apart from their fathers. An estimated 40 to 50 percent of all marriages end in separation or divorce, affecting approximately one million children each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that in 2004, births to unmarried women increased to 35.7 percent of all births, reaching a record high of almost 1.5 million births.

The demands on parents, married or single, have implications for their children. American parents today spend roughly 40 percent less time with their children than parents did a generation ago. According to one study conducted by the Minnesota Research Institute, almost 20 percent of 6th through 12th graders had not had a good conversation lasting at least 10 minutes with at least one of their parents in more than a month.

Marital and parent-child relationships are at especially high risk of disruption when parents are involved in the criminal justice system. Department of Justice data indicates that over seven million children have a parent in prison, jail, or on probation or parole. Almost 20 percent of federal and state prisoners with children under18 were married at the time of their incarceration, and another 20 percent were living with their children and likely with partners as well. Most of these parents are released while their children are still minors. For those who want to continue their family relationships when they are released, there is little institutional support to assist them to make the transition back into their families and society.

There is mounting evidence that children raised by their married, biological parents fare better on many outcome measures and that marriage is a key source of greater economic

security, health and happiness for adults, and a vital resource for healthy communities. In 1996, Congress incorporated family formation and the maintenance of two parent families as key components in the welfare reform legislation, which created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, and was reauthorized under the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) of 2005. The DRA provides funding to develop and implement healthy marriage and fatherhood programs that improve the well-being of children.

The Responsible Fatherhood program is administered by OFA in ACF. This program complements other programs administered by OFA by encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families, supporting involved parenting and promoting economic stability.

Program Purpose

The Responsible Fatherhood Program purpose is to promote responsible fatherhood by funding programs that support healthy marriage activities, promote responsible parenting and foster economic stability. The Fatherhood program will enable fathers to improve their relationships and reconnect with their children. It will help fathers overcome obstacles and barriers that often prohibit them from being the most effective and nurturing parents. While the primary goal of the initiative is to promote responsible fatherhood in all of its various forms, an essential point is to encourage responsible fatherhood within the context of marriage. Research shows that two-parent married families are the most effective environment for raising children.

Program Scope

ACF seeks to fund a wide spectrum of innovative proposals. To be innovative, applicants may propose a unique or distinctive approach for delivering services to a specific population or in a specific setting. Alternatively, innovative projects may demonstrate whether a program or service that has been successfully implemented in one setting, can work in a different context. Innovative projects may also pilot an approach that reflects a new way of thinking about responsible fatherhood. The scope of these projects can be broad and comprehensive or narrow and targeted to specific populations. Target populations may include one or more of the following groups: married fathers, single or unmarried fathers, cohabitating fathers, young or teenage fathers, and new fathers or fathers-to-be. ACF seeks to fund a selection of programs that cover a wide spectrum from married fathers and unmarried fathers residing in the home to single fathers living apart from their children. ACF especially encourages applications from programs designed to work with fathers of children with disabilities.

ACF seeks clear, well designed proposals that provide thorough descriptions of how the approach will be implemented, including reasonable plans for project marketing and outreach, participant recruitment, the type of activities and services to be offered, staffing and training, partnering with other organizations and appropriately tailoring programs to the characteristics of the people and organizations targeted. Well-designed proposals will also include descriptions of curricula, the intake and assessment process, the frequency and/intensity of services to be provided, and the format for service delivery (e.g., group, individual, retreats). Applicants should also demonstrate their ability to coordinate with any evaluation requirements and efforts. Overall, ACF encourages applicants to be flexible and creative during the program development process. At the same time, that creativity should be molded and shaped to produce a thoughtful, well-crafted plan.

There is a need for credible information with regard to how to design fatherhood services for diverse groups. ACF seeks proposals that will help determine the best ways to promote

responsible fatherhood broadly across diverse populations. A project proposal should present a clear picture of how the proposed program will work. It should describe the sequence of activities that will be used to support the desired behaviors and outcomes, and show how these activities are linked to the results that the program is expected to achieve. As with other aspects of the project, the adaptations necessary to make programs more accessible are likely to be unique to the target population.

Projects targeting diverse groups may include:

- Making services available to low-income fathers residing in the home with their children;
- Developing culturally-competent programs for minorities;
- Creating programs for teen fathers that are both engaging and informative; and
- Developing effective programs for incarcerated fathers.

Summary of Program Priority Areas

The Fatherhood grant program will strategically fund an array of efforts, ranging from small to large, across various communities. Listed below is a description of the five priority areas that will receive grant awards. Applicants should carefully review these areas in addition to the three authorized activities, Healthy Marriage, Responsible Parenting, and Economic Stability.

1. Responsible Fatherhood Multiple Activity Grants, Level 1

Under this priority area, grants will be awarded to organizations to implement two or more of the three authorized activity areas as listed above. The funding level will be up to $1,000,000 each for up to three grants.

2. Responsible Fatherhood Multiple Activity Grants, Level 2

Under this priority area, grants will be awarded to organizations to implement two or more of the three authorized activity areas as listed above. The funding level will be up to $500,000 each for up to 14 grants.

3. Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grants, Level 1

Under this priority area, grants will be awarded to organizations to implement any one of the three authorized activity areas. The funding level will be up to $250,000 each for up to 52 grants.

4. Responsible Fatherhood Single Activity Grants, Level 2

Under this priority area, grants will be awarded to organizations to implement any one of the three authorized activity areas. The funding level will be up to $500,000 each for up to ten grants.

5. Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners

Under this priority area, grants will be awarded to organizations to implement any of the three authorized activity areas. The funding level will be up to $400,000 each for up to 10 grants. Grants will be awarded to eligible organizations to provide services to promote or sustain healthy marriages primarily to unmarried couples and married couples with children where one of the parents is incarcerated or has other substantial involvement with the

criminal justice system, including recent release from prison, jail, probation or parole. In addition to marriage education, parenting and economic stability activities may also be provided. When applicable, programs must be able to deliver services to both parents using the same curriculum, even when geographically separated because of incarceration. If selected for evaluation, projects funded under this priority area will be evaluated using experimental design methodologies, when appropriate and feasible, and applicants must be prepared to cooperate with a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) selected evaluator and use the Office Management and Budget's (OMB) approved data collection requirements.

Applicants must clearly specify the priority area and funding level sought in their request for program funding. The applicant must also clearly document the capacity and ability to use the funding amount requested for the proposed program.

General Program Requirements

The following requirements must be met to be considered for these competitive grants. Please, review the requirements carefully.

Assurances for Voluntary Participation

Applicants must describe what they will do to ensure that participation in fatherhood programs or activities is voluntary and how they will inform potential participants that their involvement is voluntary. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in a score of "0" under the evaluation criteria, "Approach."

Assurances for Domestic Violence Consultation

Applications must include evidence of a commitment for consultation with one or more experts on domestic violence prevention or with domestic violence coalitions in developing activities or materials. Applicants must describe how the proposed programs or activities will address issues of domestic violence. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in a score of "0" under the evaluation criteria, "Approach."

Use of Funds

Applications must provide a commitment that funds will not be used for any other purpose other than those listed in the legislation. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in a score of "0" in the "Approach" under the evaluation criteria.

Program Access

Applicants must provide services to all eligible persons, regardless of a potential participant's race, gender, age, disability or religion. Applicants cannot, on the basis of race, gender, age, disability or religion, treat one person differently from another in determining eligibility, benefits or services provided, or applicable rules. The projects and activities assisted under these awards must be available to fathers and expectant fathers who are able to benefit from the activities on the same basis as mothers and expectant mothers.

Start Up

Projects funded under this announcement must begin operations within 90 days following notification of the grant award.

Additional Requirements

All grantees must make themselves available for the following activities:

Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation

Entrance and Annual Peer Meetings

On-site ACF-sponsored technical assistance

Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation

All grantees will fully participate in *quantitative or monitoring activities* that capture measurable indicators and outcomes. ACF will require a consistent measuring system across all funded programs. Before finalizing that system, ACF will gather suggestions from grantees and the public, create a format, and seek approval from the OMB. At that point, grantees will be informed of the measurements to be used.

ACF believes that grantee activities can increase our national knowledge about fatherhood programs and may sponsor evaluations to build the knowledge base about what works in Responsible Fatherhood programs. Toward this end, some approved grantees will be selected to participate in a more *in-depth evaluation study.* These grantees will be selected after grant awards are made. All approved grantees must agree to work cooperatively with ACF and with contractors hired by ACF to conduct evaluations. Involvement may include allowing for a random assignment of participants to either grant program activities or control groups who do not receive grantee services. Involvement might also include access to more detailed project-related information and data, including but not limited to, information about access, attendance, and outcome measures. Grantees selected for the evaluation study will likely participate in interviews, surveys, and on-site observations by evaluators.

Working cooperatively with ACF-sponsored evaluators includes agreeing to use standardized data collection instruments, collecting and providing personal information for data-matching and adjusting projects to use the random assignment of individuals or couples to Responsible Fatherhood programs or control groups, if required, where participants in the program group would receive services funded under this announcement.

Participation in an ACF-sponsored evaluation may also require providing client identifiers to the State Unemployment Insurance agency or other agencies for the purpose of collecting wage and earnings data or other data. Other data-matching may be required as well. Therefore, as a routine practice, applicants should be prepared to get voluntary consent from participants for release of personal information for evaluation purposes.

ACF anticipates the need for the collection of consistent information on grant activity, including but not limited to, services provided and outcomes associated with services supported through the grants awarded. ACF will seek comments on the proposed information collection plan and approval by OMB. Approved grantees shall be informed of the information collection requirements once approved by OMB.

Entrance and Annual Peer Meetings

The initial meeting (*Entrance Conference*) will be held within the first three months of the official award date. In addition to attending the annual grantees' meeting, grantees will be expected to attend an annual ACF sponsored technical assistance event. In general, these

meetings will be two to three days. Please note that applicants are required to allocate sufficient funding within their budget to attend the annual meetings.

Both the project director and the key staff person responsible for tracking and documenting progress toward project milestones and outcomes must attend all meetings. Applicants must allocate sufficient funding in their proposed program budget for travel, to cover transportation and per diem expenses for each of these two-three day meetings in the event they receive a grant award. Additional funds for travel expenses will not be made available once grants are awarded.

On-site ACF-sponsored technical assistance

Successful applicants must be available to receive ACF sponsored technical assistance for Responsible Fatherhood projects. Technical assistance is a comprehensive set of consulting services that are available to help public and private entities succeed in implementing their programs. These consulting services may include operational or management assistance given to aid in financial planning, program planning, program advice, marketing, information systems and other aids to management. Assistance may be offered directly by an ACF staff member or contractor.

Primary areas of technical assistance that are available include:

- Strategic Planning: Identification of goals and objectives and development of corresponding plans of action;
- Coalition Building: Strategies for building coalitions with public and private partners and "how-to" guidance;
- Fatherhood and Marriage Experts: Meetings and consultations with fatherhood and marriage experts and program providers;
- Domestic Violence Prevention: Developing protocols for domestic violence; and
- Evaluation and Performance Measurement: Development of performance measures and evaluation design options, assistance with local evaluation plans.

Marriage Skills Training Curriculum

Applicants applying under the Healthy Marriage authorized activity area should note the following:

ACF's overall goal is to help couples who have chosen marriage for themselves gain greater access to marriage education services, where they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages. To accomplish this, ACF is particularly interested in funding marriage education and marriage enrichment projects in which the primary focus is on couples. This includes, but is not limited to, engaged couples, couples interested in marriage, married couples and newly married couples. Applicants proposing to implement marriage education services must provide interventions that are skill-based and designed to increase the likelihood of healthy marriage formation and long-term marital satisfaction. The marriage education or marriage preparation intervention must include curricula designed to help couples learn and apply skills that will:

- Improve communication between couples;
- Improve the couple's ability to resolve their conflicts; and
- Strengthen the couple's commitment to increasing marital stability.

In addition, the curricula must deliver a minimum of eight hours of instruction or the number of hours established within the guidelines required by the author of the selected curriculum model. It must also be delivered over time, in no less than the number of days established within the guidelines required by the author of the selected model.

ACF is interested in funding projects that have had successful experience with delivering skill-based marriage education services. However, if for a particular sub-population, such as incarcerated individuals with substance addictions is to be served, marriage education curricula have not been developed or adapted, modifications of curriculum guidelines and procedures may be approved. Such modifications will need to be clearly identified.

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Priority Area 5:

Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage, and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners

Description

ACF has designated $4,000,000 for Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage, and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated Fathers and their Partners (MFS) to be awarded to eligible entities to implement programs with the primary purpose of promoting and strengthening marriage. In addition to marriage strengthening activities, grantees may also provide other authorized activity areas that improve parenting and promote economic stability. Responsible Fatherhood MFS Grants shall be innovative, well-designed, accessible to interested couples, and take into account the unique circumstance of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated fathers. These grants differ from multiple activity grants and single activity grants in that they focus only on fathers who are currently or very recently under criminal justice supervision. Additionally, marriage activities are the primary focus of these grants, although parenting and/or employment services can also be provided in order to strengthen the viability of the family unit.

MFS approaches must involve stakeholders from the criminal justice system, as well as include diverse community sectors (e.g., government, schools, faith-based communities, healthcare and businesses). Because the incidence of mental health and substance abuse problems is higher in this population than in the general population, applicants must be able to demonstrate how they will help clients connect to these service systems, even though payment for such services is beyond the scope of the resources available under this grant announcement. Further, MFS approaches should consider issues of couples separated by geography; the continuity of services between prison and the community; the integration of MFS services into existing re-entry programs; linkages with other service approaches to families with an incarcerated parent, (e.g., mentoring children of prisoners); and the risk factors that must be considered in program planning, (e.g., domestic violence).

The following examples highlight some different approaches applicants may consider in implementing their MFS fatherhood programs:

- A local re-entry program funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Labor or a State Department of Corrections adds a marriage and parenting component to its program to strengthen the family supports available to the prisoner returning to the community.

- A State Department of Corrections adds a marriage/relationship strengthening component to its in-house prison re-entry program for the prisoner and his partner to continue marriage strengthening activities upon release.
- A faith-based organization provides mentoring to federal and state prisoners while in prison and after release adds a marriage and parent mentoring component to its program and begins mentoring both the prisoner and his partner.
- A community corrections program develops a team approach with a community marriage program to identify and provide services to couples who need marriage strengthening activities.

Applicants may design their proposals to be as broad or as focused as they determine necessary to meet the needs of their target populations. An applicant may choose an approach that focuses on marriage strengthening and also provides services to promote parenting and economic stability, or it may focus *only* on providing the marriage strengthening activities. Additionally, the targeted population could be limited to fathers in prison; fathers in community corrections, such as probation; formerly incarcerated fathers living in the community; or a combination that provides services while in prison or in the community. Applicants must address how services will be made available to both the incarcerated/re-entering father and his partner.

Applicants that apply under this priority area may be selected to participate in an ACF evaluation project. For those sites selected to be evaluated, assistance will be provided by an ACF-sponsored evaluator. While sites will not be responsible for conducting their own independent assessments, they will be required to use some portion of their grant funds to ensure that the data necessary for the ACF sponsored evaluation is complete and accurate. Therefore, applicants must provide a narrative demonstrating an understanding of how their project could be evaluated.

In addressing the evaluation of results, the applicant should state how to determine the extent to which the project has achieved its stated objectives and the extent to which the accomplishment of objectives can be attributed to the project. Discuss the criteria to be used to evaluate results, and explain the methodology that could be used to determine if the needs identified and discussed are being met and if the project results and benefits are being achieved. Include in this narrative a discussion of how many participants the applicant anticipates will be needed to measure the programmatic outcomes it expects, and the extent to which it anticipates this is feasible within its program. With respect to the conduct of the project, define the procedures to be employed to determine whether the project is being conducted in a manner consistent with the work plan presented and discuss the expected outcomes of the project's various activities that address the project's effectiveness. Grantees must also describe how their program will incorporate the collection of required data on who is being served and what outcomes they experience. Even though some grantees may not be required to provide for their own evaluation, all applicants must address this evaluation requirement.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Instrument Type:	Grant
Anticipated Total Priority Area Funding:	$4,000,000
Anticipated Number of Awards:	8 to 10
Ceiling on Amount of Individual Awards:	$500,000 per budget period
Floor on Amount of Individual Awards:	$300,000 per budget period
Average Projected Award Amount:	$400,000 per budget period
Length of Project Periods:	60-month project with five 12-month budget periods

This announcement invites applications for five-year project periods (up to $400,000 per year for five years). In the first year of the project, grants will be awarded on a competitive basis. Continuation grant applications will be considered on a noncompetitive basis for years two through five subject to the availability of funds, the satisfactory progress of the grantee, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Federal Government. Grants will be awarded for one-year budget periods throughout the project.

Applicants should also note that any program income generated through this grant must be added to the Federal funds committed to the project and used to further the objectives of the project as outlined in 45 CFR 74.24(b).

Awards under this announcement are subject to the availability of funds.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants:

- State governments
- County governments
- City or township governments
- Special district governments
- Independent school districts
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
- Native American Tribal governments (Federally recognized)
- Native American Tribal organizations (other than Federally recognized)
- Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities
- Non-profits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
- Non-profits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS, other than institutions of higher education
- Others (See below)

Faith-based and community organizations that meet the statutory eligibility requirements are eligible to apply under this announcement.

Please see *Section IV* for required documentation supporting eligibility or funding restrictions if any are applicable.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching: Yes

Grantees are required to meet a non-Federal share of the project costs. Grantees must provide at least 10 percent of the total approved cost of the project. The total approved cost of the project is the sum of the ACF share and the non-Federal share. The non-Federal share may be met by cash or in-kind contributions, although applicants are encouraged to meet their match requirements through cash contributions. For example, in order to meet the match requirements, a project with a total approved project cost of $1,000,000, requesting $900,000 in ACF funds, must provide a non-Federal share of at least $100,000 (10 percent of total approved project cost of $1,000,000.) Grantees will be held accountable for commitments of non-Federal resources even if they exceed the amount of the required match. Failure to provide the required amount will result in the disallowance of Federal funds. A lack of supporting documentation at the time of application will not exclude the application from competitive review.

The non-Federal match will be evaluated according to the "Non-Federal Resources" evaluation criterion found in *Section V* of this announcement.

Please refer to *Section IV* for any pre-award requirements.

3. Other:

D-U-N-S Requirement

All applicants must have a D&B Data Universal Numbering System (D-U-N-S) number. On June 27, 2003, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published in the *Federal Register* a new Federal policy applicable to all Federal grant applicants. The policy requires Federal grant applicants to provide a D-U-N-S number when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements on or after October 1, 2003. The D-U-N-S number will be required whether an applicant is submitting a paper application or using the government-wide electronic portal, Grants.gov. A D-U-N-S number will be required for every application for a new award or renewal/continuation of an award, including applications or plans under formula, entitlement, and block grant programs, submitted on or after October 1, 2003.

Please ensure that your organization has a D-U-N-S number. You may acquire a D-U-N-S number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free D-U-N-S number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or you may request a number on-line at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/exit_page.html?http://www.dnb.com.

Proof of Non-Profit Status

Non-profit organizations applying for funding are required to submit proof of their non-profit status.

Proof of non-profit status is any one of the following:

- A reference to the applicant organization's listing in the IRS's most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in the IRS Code.
- A copy of a currently valid IRS tax-exemption certificate.

- A statement from a State taxing body, State attorney general, or other appropriate State official certifying that the applicant organization has non-profit status and that none of the net earnings accrue to any private shareholders or individuals.
- A certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes non-profit status.
- Any of the items in the subparagraphs immediately above for a State or national parent organization and a statement signed by the parent organization that the applicant organization is a local non-profit affiliate.

When applying electronically, we strongly suggest that you attach your proof of non-profit status with your electronic application.

Private, non-profit organizations are encouraged to submit with their applications the survey located under *Grant Related Documents and Forms: Survey for Private, Non-Profit Grant Applicants, titled, Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants,* at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm.

Disqualification Factors

Applications that exceed the ceiling amount will be deemed non-responsive and will not be considered for funding under this announcement.

Any application that fails to satisfy the deadline requirements referenced in *Section IV.3* will be deemed non-responsive and will not be considered for funding under this announcement.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. Address to Request Application Package:

OFA Operations Center
c/o The Dixon Group
Office of Family Assistance
118 Q Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
Phone: 866-779-8458
Email: mailto:ofa@dixongroup.com

2. Content and Form of Application Submission:

Letters of Intent

Applicants are strongly encouraged to notify the OFA Operations Center, c/o The Dixon Group, 118 Q Street, NE, Office of Family Assistance, Washington, DC 20002, Email: ofa@dixongroup.com, of their intention to submit an application under this announcement. Please submit the letter of intent by the deadline date listed in *Section IV.3.*

The letter of intent should include the following information: number and title of this announcement; the applicant's organizational name and address; one to two sentences stating that the applicant organization intends to submit an application for this grant and contact person's information: name, phone number, fax number and email address.

Letter of intent information will be used to determine the number of expert reviewers needed to evaluate applications. Failure to submit a letter of intent will not impact eligibility to submit an application and will not disqualify an application from competitive review.

Application Content

Each application must include the following components:

1. Table of Contents.
2. Abstract of Proposed Project - A very brief description not to exceed 250 words. The abstract would be suitable for use in an announcement that the application has been selected for a grant award and identifies the type of project, the target population, and the major elements of the work plan. Use plain language that is easy for non-experts to understand.
3. Application for Federal Assistance, SF-424 - Must be completed and signed by an official of the organization applying for the grant who has authority to obligate the organization legally.
4. Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs, SF-424A - Must be completed.
5. Project Narrative - A narrative that addresses the criteria described in *section V.1*, Criteria.
6. Narrative Budget Justification - A narrative that addresses criteria described in *section V.1*, Criteria.
7. Supporting Documents - These may include organizational charts, financial statements, letters of support, third-party agreements, and resumes of key staff. The content to include in the supporting documents is described in section V.1, Criteria.
8. Additional Certification, Assurances and Disclosure Forms.

Page Limitation

The total length of the application (including SF -424 and 424A, project abstract, table of contents, budget information, project narrative) and supporting documents (e.g., letters of support, third-party agreements, resumes or additional certification, assurance and disclosure forms) must not exceed 60 pages in length. Any pages exceeding this limit will be removed and not provided for panel review.

Application Format

Submit application materials on white 8 1/2 x 11 inch paper only. Do not use colored, oversized or folded materials.

Please do not include organizational brochures or other promotional materials, slides, films, clips, etc.

A standard font such as Times New Roman must be used. The font size must not be smaller than 12-point. The margins must be at least one inch on all sides. Project and budget narrative sections must be double-spaced.

Number all application pages sequentially throughout the package, beginning with the abstract of the proposed project as page number one. All application pages including government forms and attachments should be numbered.

Arrange all materials in the order listed in the **Application Content** section above.

Applicants are encouraged to use job titles and not specific names in developing the application budget. However, specific salary rates or amounts for staff positions identified must be included in the application budget.

Supporting documents (e.g., letters of support, third-party agreements, resumes) should follow the same general guidelines but may be single-spaced. Letters of support may use the supporting organizations' letterhead. If copies of third-party agreements are lengthy, the applicant may substitute an annotated list of those agreements briefly summarizing with whom who the agreement is, the scope of work to be performed, work schedules and remuneration, and any other core aspects of the agreement that defines the nature of the relationship. **Note: Letters of support or intent to cooperate or other evidence are required for collaborations with criminal justice agencies.**

Forms and Certifications

The project description should include all the information requirements described in the specific evaluation criteria outlined in this program announcement under *Section V.* Application Review Information. In addition to the project description, the applicant needs to complete all of the Standard Forms required as part of the application process for awards under this announcement.

Applicants seeking financial assistance under this announcement must file the appropriate Standard Forms as described in this section. All applicants must submit SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. For non-construction programs, applicants must also submit SF-424A, Budget Information and SF-424B, Assurances. For construction programs, applicants must also submit SF-424C, Budget Information and SF-424D, Assurances. The forms may be reproduced for use in submitting applications. Applicants must sign and return the standard forms with their application.

Applicants must furnish prior to award an executed copy of the SF-LLL, Certification Regarding Lobbying, when applying for an award in excess of $100,000. Applicants who have used non-Federal funds for lobbying activities in connection with receiving assistance under this announcement shall complete a disclosure form, if applicable, with their application. Applicants must sign and return the certification with their application.

Applicants must also understand that they will be held accountable for the smoking prohibition included within Public Law (P.L.) 103-227, Title XII Environmental Tobacco Smoke (also known as the PRO-KIDS Act of 1994). A copy of the *Federal Register* notice that implements the smoking prohibition is included with this form. By signing and submitting the application, applicants are providing the necessary certification and are not required to return it.

Applicants must make the appropriate certification of their compliance with all Federal statutes relating to nondiscrimination. By signing and submitting the application, applicants are providing the necessary certification and are not required to return it. Complete the standard forms and the associated certifications and assurances based on the instructions on the forms. The forms and certifications may be found at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm.

Private, non-profit organizations are encouraged to submit with their applications the survey located under *Grant Related Documents and Forms: Survey for Private, Non-Profit Grant*

Applicants, titled, Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants, at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm.

Those organizations required to provide proof of non-profit status, please refer to *Section III.3*.

Please see *Section V.1* for instructions on preparing the full project description.

Please reference *Section IV.3* for details about acknowledgement of received applications.

Electronic Submission

You may submit your application to us in either electronic or paper format. To submit an application electronically, please use the http://www.grants.gov/ site.

If you use Grants.gov, you will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it off-line, and then upload and submit the application via the Grants.gov site. ACF will not accept grant applications via facsimile or email.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Before you submit an electronic application, you must complete the organization registration process as well as obtain and register "electronic signature credentials" for the Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). Since this process may take more than five business days, it is important to start this process early, well in advance of the application deadline. **Be sure to complete all Grants.gov registration processes listed on the Organization Registration Checklist, which can be found at** http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/registration_checklist.html**.**

Please note the following if you plan to submit your application electronically via Grants.gov:

- Electronic submission is voluntary, but strongly encouraged.
- You may access the electronic application for this program at http://www.grants.gov/ There you can search for the downloadable application package by utilizing the Grants.gov FIND function.
- **We strongly recommend that you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the application process through Grants.gov.** We encourage applicants that submit electronically to submit well before the closing date and time so that if difficulties are encountered an applicant can still submit a hard copy via express mail.
- To use Grants.gov, you, as the applicant, must have a D-U-N-S number and register in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). You should allow a minimum of five days to complete the CCR registration. **REMINDER: CCR registration expires each year and thus must be updated annually. You cannot upload an application to Grants.gov without having a current CCR registration AND electronic signature credentials for the AOR.**
- The electronic application is submitted by the AOR. To submit electronically, the AOR must obtain and register electronic signature credentials approved by the organization's E-Business Point of Contact who maintains the organization's CCR registration.
- You may submit all documents electronically, including all information typically included on the SF-424 and all necessary assurances and certifications.

- Your application must comply with any page limitation requirements described in this program announcement.
- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive an automatic acknowledgement from Grants.gov that contains a Grants.gov tracking number. ACF will retrieve your application from Grants.gov.
- ACF may request that you provide original signatures on forms at a later date.
- You will not receive additional point value because you submit a grant application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you submit an application in hard copy.
- If you encounter difficulties in using Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Help Desk at: 1-800-518-4726, or by email at support@grants.gov to report the problem and obtain assistance.
- Checklists and registration brochures are maintained at http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted to assist you in the registration process.
- When submitting electronically via Grants.gov, applicants must comply with all due dates ***AND*** times referenced in *Section IV.3*.

Hard Copy Submission

Applicants that are submitting their application in paper format should submit one original and two copies of the complete application. The original and each of the two copies must include all required forms, certifications, assurances, and appendices, be signed by an authorized representative, have original signatures, and be unbound.

3. Submission Dates and Times:

Due Date For Letter of Intent: 06/01/2006

Due Date for Applications: 07/03/2006

Explanation of Due Dates

The due date for receipt of applications is referenced above. Applications received after 4:30 p.m., eastern time, on the due date will be classified as late and will not be considered in the current competition.

Applicants are responsible for ensuring that applications are mailed or hand-delivered or submitted electronically well in advance of the application due date and time.

Mail

Applications that are submitted by mail must be received no later than 4:30 p.m., eastern time, on the due date referenced above at the address listed in *Section IV.6*.

Hand Delivery

Applications hand carried by applicants, applicant couriers, other representatives of the applicant, or by overnight/express mail couriers must be received on or before the due date referenced above, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., eastern time, at the address referenced in *Section IV.6.*, between Monday and Friday (excluding Federal holidays).

Electronic Submission

Applications submitted electronically via Grants.gov must be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m., eastern time, on the due date referenced above.

ACF cannot accommodate transmission of applications by facsimile or email.

Late Applications

Applications that do not meet the requirements above are considered late applications. ACF shall notify each late applicant that its application will not be considered in the current competition.

ANY APPLICATION RECEIVED AFTER 4:30 P.M., EASTERN TIME, ON THE DUE DATE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR COMPETITION.

Extension of Deadlines

ACF may extend application deadlines when circumstances such as acts of God (floods, hurricanes, etc.) occur; when there are widespread disruptions of mail service; or in other rare cases. A determination to extend or waive deadline requirements rests with the Chief Grants Management Officer.

Receipt acknowledgement for application packages will not be provided to applicants who submit their package via mail, courier services, or by hand delivery. Applicants will receive an electronic acknowledgement for applications that are submitted via http://www.grants.gov/.

Checklist

You may use the checklist below as a guide when preparing your application package.

What to Submit	Required Content	Required Form or Format	When to Submit
Letter of Intent	See Section IV.2	Found in Section IV.2	06/01/2006
SF-424	See Section IV.2	See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm	By application due date.
SF-424A	See Section IV.2	See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm	By application due date.
Table of Contents	See Section IV.2	Found in Section IV.2	By application due date.
Project Abstract	See Sections IV.2 and V	Found in Sections IV.2 and V	By application due date.

What to Submit	Required Content	Required Form or Format	When to Submit
Project Description	See Sections IV.2 and V	Found in Sections IV.2 and V	By application due date.
Budget Narrative/Justification	See Sections IV.2 and V	Found in Sections IV.2 and V	By application due date.
Proof of Non-Profit Status	See Section III.3	Found in Section III.3	By date of award.
Support Letters	See Section IV.2	Found in Section IV.2	By application due date.
SF-LLL Certification Regarding Lobbying	See Section IV.2	See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm	By application due date.
Certification Regarding Environmental Tobacco Smoke	See Section IV.2	See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm	By application due date.

Additional Forms

Private, non-profit organizations are encouraged to submit with their applications the survey located under *Grant Related Documents and Forms: Survey for Private, Non-Profit Grant Applicants, titled, Survey on Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Applicants,* at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm.

What to Submit	Required Content	Required Form or Format	When to Submit
Survey for Private, Non-Profit Grant Applicants	See form.	See http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm	By application due date.

4. Intergovernmental Review:

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs," or 45 CFR Part 100, "Intergovernmental Review of Department of Health and Human Services Programs and Activities".

5. Funding Restrictions:

Grant awards will not allow reimbursement of pre-award costs.

Construction and purchase of real property are not allowable activities or expenditures under this grant award.

Sub-Contracting or Delegating Projects

ACF will not fund any project where the role of the applicant is primarily to serve as a conduit for funds to organizations other than the applicant. The applicant must have a substantive role in the implementation of the project for which funding is requested. This prohibition does not bar sub-contracting for specific services or activities needed to conduct the project.

Profits

Subpart E - Special Provisions for Awards to Commercial Organizations (45 CFR 74.81) provides that, except for awards under the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Small Business Technology Transfer Research (STTR) programs, no HHS funds may be paid as profit to any recipient even if the recipient is a commercial organization. Profit is any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs.

Thus, Federal funds received as a result of this announcement cannot be paid as profit (i.e., any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs of the recipient) to grantees or sub-grantees (45 CFR 74.81).

6. Other Submission Requirements:

Please see *Sections IV.2* and *IV.3* for deadline information and other application requirements.

Submit applications to one of the following addresses:

Submission by Mail

OFA Operations Center
c/o The Dixon Group
Office of Family Assistance
118 Q Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Hand Delivery

OFA Operations Center
c/o The Dixon Group
Office of Family Assistance
118 Q Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Electronic Submission

Please see *Section IV.2* for guidelines and requirements when submitting applications electronically via http://www.grants.gov/.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13)

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 40 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed and reviewing the collection information.

The project description is approved under OMB control number 0970-0139, which expires 4/30/2007.

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.

1. Criteria:

Part I THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

The project description provides the majority of information by which an application is evaluated and ranked in competition with other applications for available assistance. The project description should be concise and complete. It should address the activity for which Federal funds are being requested. Supporting documents should be included where they can present information clearly and succinctly. In preparing the project description, information that is responsive to each of the requested evaluation criteria must be provided. Awarding offices use this and other information in making their funding recommendations. It is important, therefore, that this information be included in the application in a manner that is clear and complete.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS

ACF is particularly interested in specific project descriptions that focus on outcomes and convey strategies for achieving intended performance. Project descriptions are evaluated on the basis of substance and measurable outcomes, not length. Extensive exhibits are not required. Cross-referencing should be used rather than repetition. Supporting information concerning activities that will not be directly funded by the grant or information that does not directly pertain to an integral part of the grant-funded activity should be placed in an appendix.

Pages should be numbered and a table of contents should be included for easy reference.

Part II GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING A FULL PROJECT DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Applicants that are required to submit a full project description shall prepare the project description statement in accordance with the following instructions while being aware of the specified evaluation criteria. The text options give a broad overview of what the project

description should include while the evaluation criteria identify the measures that will be used to evaluate applications.

PROJECT SUMMARY/ABSTRACT

Provide a summary of the project description (one page or less) with reference to the funding request.

OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

Clearly identify the physical, economic, social, financial, institutional, and/or other problem(s) requiring a solution. The need for assistance must be demonstrated and the principal and subordinate objectives of the project must be clearly stated; supporting documentation, such as letters of support and testimonials from concerned interests other than the applicant, may be included. Any relevant data based on planning studies should be included or referred to in the endnotes/footnotes. Incorporate demographic data and participant/beneficiary information, as needed. In developing the project description, the applicant may volunteer or be requested to provide information on the total range of projects currently being conducted and supported (or to be initiated), some of which may be outside the scope of the program announcement.

APPROACH

Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Account for all functions or activities identified in the application. Cite factors that might accelerate or decelerate the work and state your reason for taking the proposed approach rather than others. Describe any unusual features of the project such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvement.

Provide quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments to be achieved for each function or activity in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished.

Where time frames, activities and quarterly projects differ across the five 12-month periods, these should be noted. It is anticipated that the first year activities will contain more start-up activities and infrastructure development, so that accomplishments and service provisions may be different in year one than in subsequent years. Applicants should discuss what types of data they anticipate will be collected and maintained to support their identified outcomes and how it will be maintained to protect the privacy and confidentiality of their clients. Where a substantial component of the services will be provided through referral networks, the applicant should provide information on how information on the referral services will be collected. Applicants should also discuss their ability to cooperate with other information collection requirements that may be required to support evaluation needs of the ACF contractor. Applicants who propose to work with a State Department of Corrections, Federal Bureau of Prison, State parole or probation agency or similar organizations must provide evidence that the named criminal justice agency has agreed to the new partnership or is already working with the applicant on related issues.

When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

If any data is to be collected, maintained, and/or disseminated, clearance may be required from the OMB. This clearance pertains to any "collection of information that is conducted or sponsored by ACF."

Provide a list of organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals who will work on the project along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

EVALUATION

Provide a narrative addressing how the conduct of the project and the results of the project will be evaluated. In addressing the evaluation of results, state how you will determine the extent to which the project has achieved its stated objectives and the extent to which the accomplishment of objectives can be attributed to the project. Discuss the criteria to be used to evaluate results, and explain the methodology that will be used to determine if the needs identified and discussed are being met and if the project results and benefits are being achieved. With respect to the conduct of the project, define the procedures to be employed to determine whether the project is being conducted in a manner consistent with the work plan presented and discuss the impact of the project's various activities that address the project's effectiveness.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES

Provide information on the applicant organization(s) and cooperating partners, such as: organizational charts; financial statements; audit reports or statements from Certified Public Accountants/Licensed Public Accountants; Employer Identification Number(s); contact persons and telephone numbers; names of bond carriers; child care licenses and other documentation of professional accreditation; information on compliance with Federal/State/local government standards; documentation of experience in the program area; and, other pertinent information.

If the applicant is a non-profit organization, it should submit proof of its non-profit status in its application. The non-profit agency can accomplish this by providing any one of the following: a) a reference to the applicant organization's listing in the IRS's most recent list of tax-exempt organizations described in the IRS Code; b) a copy of a currently valid IRS tax exemption certificate; c) a statement from a State taxing body, State attorney general, or other appropriate State official certifying that the applicant organization has a non-profit status and that none of the net earnings accrues to any private shareholders or individuals; d) a certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes non-profit status; or e) any of the items immediately above for a State or national parent organization and a statement signed by the parent organization that the applicant organization is a local non-profit affiliate.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

The following evaluation criteria appear in weighted descending order. The corresponding score values indicate the relative importance that ACF places on each evaluation criterion; however, applicants need not develop their applications precisely according to the order presented. Application components may be organized such that a reviewer will be able to follow a seamless and logical flow of information (i.e., from a broad overview of the project to more detailed information about how it will be conducted).

In considering how applicants will carry out the responsibilities addressed under this announcement, competing applications for financial assistance will be reviewed and evaluated against the following criteria:

APPROACH - 40 points

Timeline, action plan and activities. (20 points)

- The activities in the action plan reflect a highly innovative, cutting-edge approach that directly supports the authorized activity areas selected to be included in the project. *(4 points)*
- The action plan is well-designed and specifies what will be done, who (e.g., individuals and organizations) will do it and when it will be accomplished. The plan describes how the accomplishment of project milestones and other outcomes will be documented. The extent on which the approach reflects a documented partnership agreement between the applicant and other organizations and the nature of the partnership is described in sufficient detail. The role and function of each organization will support the overall mission of the project to promote responsible fatherhood. *(8 points)*
- There is a reasonable timeline for implementing the proposed project and any sub-projects. The timeline includes the activities to be conducted in chronological order, showing a reasonable schedule of project milestones and target dates, and the factors that may accelerate or decelerate the work. This timeline must document a schedule that will have program activities operational within three months of the award date. *(8 points)*

2. Project rationale and strategies to overcome barriers. (15 Points)

- The proposed activities are logical given the characteristics and needs of the target population(s), the outcomes to be achieved and the priority area chosen. The rationale for the approach is based on a demonstrated understanding of the target population and the need for the proposed activities. *(5 points)*
- There are reasonable approaches for recruiting and retaining participants that reflect a good understanding of the target population and are appropriate given the authorized activity areas to be included in the project. The approach identifies potential barriers that exist for couples who could not access or easily afford services and includes strategies for overcoming those barriers. *(5 points)*
- There is a clear and reasonable plan for how to refer individuals to appropriate services when the nature of their problems (e.g., mental illness, severe marital distress, drug and alcohol abuse) is beyond the scope of this grant is clear and reasonable. *(3 points)*
- Proposed fatherhood activities include opportunities to reinforce skills to promote and strengthen marriage (e.g., refresher sessions for couples, individual follow-up, re-enrollment in subsequent workshops). *(2 points)*

3. Domestic violence and voluntary nature of program. (5 Points)

Applicants that fail to address these evaluation criteria will receive '0' points for the entire Approach section.

- The applicant has consulted with experts in domestic violence or with relevant community domestic violence coalitions in developing programs or activities. The

description of how programs or activities will address issues of domestic violence is clear and reasonable. The applicant has provided a description of the consultation process and how it informed program development. *(2 points)*

- Participation in programs or activities shall be voluntary. There is a clear and reasonable description of what the sub-applicant will do to ensure that participation in programs or activities is voluntary. There is a clear and reasonable description to inform potential participants that their involvement is voluntary. *(2 points)*
- The applicant has provided a written commitment that funds will only be used for the three authorized activity areas. *(1 point)*

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES - 20 points

1. The project narrative and supporting documents (e.g., organizational charts, financial statements, letters of support) clearly detail the applicant organization's capabilities and proven capacity and experience in the marriage and criminal justice fields. Successful completion of this project is realistic given its experience with the development, implementation, administration and evaluation of similar projects. *(5 points)*
2. The project narrative and supporting documents (third-party agreements) clearly detail the roles and capabilities of any partner organizations. Successful completion of this project is realistic given the qualifications of any partners and the nature of their relationship to the applicant organization. In cases where partners have not yet been selected, the approach and criteria that will be used to select partners are clearly described and reasonable. The financial relationships between the applicant organization and any partner organizations are clearly described and can reasonably be expected to ensure proper stewardship of Federal funds. *(3 points)*
3. The project narrative and supporting documents (e.g., resumes) clearly detail the qualifications of key staff. Successful completion of this project is realistic given the qualifications of key staff. In cases where these positions have not been filled, the approach and criteria that will be used to hire experienced and qualified staff are clearly described and reasonable. *(7 points)*
4. The qualifications of the applicant organization, any partner organizations, and key staff should demonstrate experience in and capacity to:
    - Deliver services that promote marriage strengthening and other responsible fatherhood activities, and directly support the authorized activity areas to be included in the project;
    - Implement the evaluation plan;
    - Extend program outreach by eliminating barriers to accessibility and implementing strategies to recruit and retain program participants from the target population; and
    - Incorporate in plans, lessons learned, for the continuation of services found to be promising. *(5 points)*

BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION - 15 points

1. The budget presentation is clear and detailed. The budget narrative clearly explains and justifies the budget information presented on SF-424 and SF-424A. *(2 points)*
2. The costs of the proposed project are reasonable in view of the types and range of activities to be conducted, the number of participants to be served, and the expected results and benefits. *(5 points)*
3. The budget narrative clearly describes the fiscal controls that will ensure the prudent use, proper disbursement and accurate accounting of funds. *(2 points)*

4. The applicant's budget reflects appropriate plans for sub-grants or sub-contracts. *(3 points)*
5. The budget narrative clearly explains how and what sources will be used to meet the match requirement. *(2 points)*
6. The budget describes the procedures for documenting program income to ensure that it is added to the Federal funds committed to the project and used to further the objectives of the project. *(1 point)*

EVALUATION - 15 points

All applications under this priority area will be evaluated using the following criteria. However, if selected for inclusion in an ACF-sponsored evaluation, the grantee will not be required to conduct a separate assessment of its program.

1. Project milestones (e.g., number of couples who complete a marriage strengthening curriculum, fathers who obtained jobs, number of events hosted, number of newsletters sent, number of staff trained) are clearly identified. Plans for monitoring and documenting progress toward project milestones are thorough and reasonable, and demonstrate a willingness to fully cooperate with ACF sponsored evaluation contractors. Evaluation plans should include a discussion of the anticipated number of clients served over the period and whether this is sufficient to evaluate program impacts. Plans for monitoring progress also allow for identifying barriers and catalysts to achieving milestones and making relevant adjustments as necessary. *(8 points)*
2. The expected project objectives and outcomes are clearly identified. A range of project outcomes may be observed. Basic program outcomes may be measured by surveying participants to measure their satisfaction with the program or to identify what they found most helpful. Other outcomes may include participants' knowledge of and access to other social services. More advanced evaluations may compare the measures, such as marital status, quality, stability or satisfaction of participants, observed at the end of the program to measures observed before the program. Advanced and complex evaluation plans are not required for funding. Plans for monitoring and documenting changes in participant or community outcomes are thorough and reasonable. *(4 points)*
3. Key staff responsible for tracking progress toward project milestones and measuring the outcomes of the project possesses adequate knowledge, training, experience, and the capacity to implement data collection activities that support the ACF sponsored evaluation. *(3 points)*

OBJECTIVES AND NEED FOR ASSISTANCE - 10 points

1. The definition of the problem and need for assistance are clearly stated and directly related to the Responsible Fatherhood Grant Program. *(4 points)*
2. Objectives directly support the chosen set of the authorized activity areas to be addressed in this project. *(3 points)*
3. The people to be served are clearly described in terms of population size and demographic characteristics, including relevant fatherhood trends. The rationale for selecting the group is reasonable given the objectives of the project and the authorized activity areas to be included. *(2 points)*
4. The precise geographic location of the project and boundaries of the area to be served by the project are clearly described. If the project is providing services in

multiple locations (for example, a correctional institution and a community some distance away), both locations should be described. *(1 Point)*

4. Review and Selection Process:

No grant award will be made under this announcement on the basis of an incomplete application.

Panel Review

Applications that pass the ACF initial screening will be reviewed and rated by a panel of experts based on the project elements and review criteria presented in relevant sections of this program announcement.

The review criteria are designed to enable the review panel to assess the quality of a proposed project and determine the likelihood of its success. The criteria are closely related to each other and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application. The review panel awards points only to applications that are responsive to the program elements and relevant review criteria within the context of this program announcement.

ACF uses the reviewer scores when considering competing applications. Reviewer scores will weigh heavily in funding decisions, but will not be the only factors considered.

Applications generally will be considered in order of the average scores assigned by the review panel. Because other important factors are taken into consideration, highly ranked applications are not guaranteed funding. These other considerations include, for example: the geographic distribution of applications, range of target populations served (e.g., low-income, minority, immigrant), the community sectors represented, the proposed project's consistency with the three authorized activity areas, the comments of reviewers and government staff, the amount and duration of the grant requested, the projected implementation schedule, audit reports, investigative reports, and the timely and proper completion by the applicant of projects previously funded with Federal funds.

Approved but Unfunded Applications

Applications that are approved but unfunded may be held over for funding in the next funding cycle, pending the availability of funds, for a period not to exceed one year.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. Award Notices:

The successful applicants will be notified through the issuance of a Financial Assistance Award document, which sets forth the amount of funds granted, the terms and conditions of the grant, the effective date of the grant, the budget period for which initial support will be given, the non-Federal share to be provided (if applicable), and the total project period for which support is contemplated. The Financial Assistance Award will be signed by the Grants Officer and transmitted via postal mail.

Organizations whose applications will not be funded will be notified in writing.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Grantees are subject to the requirements in 45 CFR Part 74 (non-governmental) or 45 CFR Part 92 (governmental).

Direct Federal grants, sub-award funds, or contracts under this ACF program shall not be used to support inherently religious activities such as religious instruction, worship, or proselytization. Therefore, organizations must take steps to separate, in time or location, their inherently religious activities from the services funded under this program. States agencies awarded federal funds under the Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Program are subject to the requirements in the TANF Charitable Choice Regulations. Therefore, in accordance with TANF Charitable Choice provisions State agencies awarded funds under this program will be required to establish an alternative service provider. These Charitable Choice Regulations are contained in 45 CFR Part 260, which can be accessed at: http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_05/45cfr260_05.html

All other entities (non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, community organizations, institutions of higher education, etc.) awarded funds under this program are governed by the Equal Treatment for Faith-Based Organizations provisions contained in 45 CFR Part 87, which can be found at the HHS web site at: http://www.os.dhhs.gov/fbci/waisgate21.pdf.

Faith-based and community organizations may reference the "Guidance to Faith-Based and Community Organizations on Partnering with the Federal Government" at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/guidance/index.html.

3. Reporting Requirements:

Grantees will be required to submit program progress and financial reports (SF-269 found at: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/forms.htm) throughout the project period. Program progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period.

Final reports may be submitted in hard copy to the Grants Management Office Contact listed in Section VII of this announcement.

Program Progress Reports: Semi-Annually
Financial Reports: Semi-Annually

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

Program Office Contact:

Terri Ames
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Family Assistance
370 L'Enfant Promenade, SW
Aerospace Building, 5th Floor-East
Washington, DC 20447

Phone: 202-401-5436
Email: tames@acf.hhs.gov

Grants Management Office Contact:

Sylvia Johnson
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
ACF - Office of Grants Management
Division of Discretionary Grants
370 L' Enfant Promenade, SW
Aerospace Building, 6th Floor-East
Washington, DC 20447
Phone: 202-401-5513
Email: mailto:ACFOGME-Grants@acf.hhs.gov

VIII. OTHER INFORMATION

Date: 05/17/2006

Sidonie Squier
Director
Office of Family Assistance

Appendix

B

Understanding Implementation Success among MFS-IP Grantees: A Conceptual Framework

The MFS-IP grantees delivered a wide variety of program models for serving justice-involved fathers and their families. Although the impact of these programs is yet to be determined, implementation study data point to certain common characteristics of grantees that achieved desirable implementation outcomes, such as meeting enrollment targets, delivering corrections- and community-based services, or preparing for sustainability. Similarly, commonalities among grantees that fell short of their goals in a given aspect of implementation were also evident. This appendix proposes a model of MFS-IP program implementation that describes how various factors shaped implementation outcomes of key interest for implementation science and the design of future programs for this population.

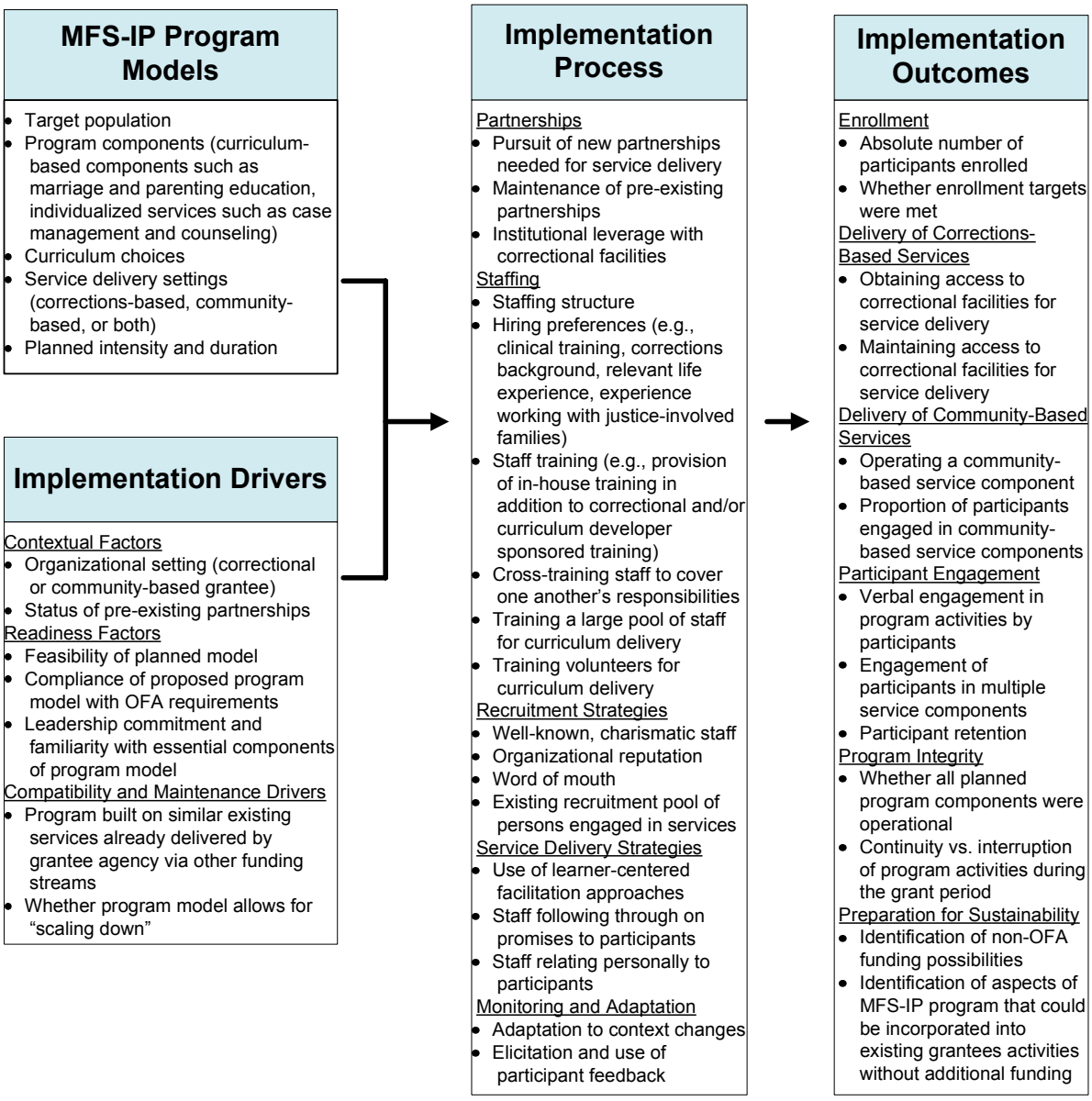
B.1 PROGRAM MODELS AND IMPLEMENTATION DRIVERS

Figure B-1 describes how implementation outcomes achieved by MFS-IP grantees were shaped by the program model; implementation drivers related to context, readiness, and compatibility; and implementation processes such as staffing, monitoring and adaptation, and approaches to partnership and service delivery.

Several aspects of the program model were seen to influence implementation outcomes:

1. **Target population**, including geographic catchment area and eligibility criteria related to relationship status, incarceration status (e.g., time until release), and domestic violence risk
2. **Program components**, including curriculum-based components such as relationship and parenting education, and/or individualized services such as case management and counseling
3. **Curriculum choices**, particularly curriculum cost, relevance for the target population, and whether in-house or commercial curricula were used
4. **Service delivery settings**: all grantees delivered some corrections-based services (typically in state prison facilities), but they varied in terms of whether they also intended to deliver community-based services to partners in the community and/or to released fathers

Figure B-1. MFS-IP Implementation Process Model



5. Finally, **planned intensity and duration** of programming, including how often, for how long, and on what schedule services were offered, was seen to influence many aspects of implementation processes and outcomes

In addition, implementation success was shaped by the presence or absence of several upstream implementation drivers. These included aspects of context, such as whether the grantee was a correctional agency or a community-based organization; readiness factors, including whether the program as proposed was feasible, compliant with grant requirements, and highly valued by key leaders in the grantee and partner agencies; and

compatibility factors, including scalability and whether the proposed program built on other, similar services already being delivered by the grantee.

B.2 IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

To make their proposed program models operational in the context of the implementation drivers described above, grantees employed several common implementation process strategies. Processes in the following areas—organizational partnerships, staffing, participant recruitment, service delivery, and monitoring and adaptation—appeared to lead to stronger implementation outcomes.

With regard to **partnerships**, processes that were linked with implementation success included persistent pursuit of new service delivery partnerships, active maintenance of organizational partnerships, and grantees' ability to use institutional leverage in negotiations with correctional facilities—whether due to the grantee's own position within the correctional system or a vested interest on the part of correctional administrators in maintaining positive relationships with an external grantee.

Staffing approaches were also crucial in shaping implementation outcomes. Approaches included providing comprehensive, in-house staff training; using staffing structures that allowed for "cross-training" and better coverage in times of absence or position vacancy; and including a wide pool of paid staff and/or volunteers in relationship and parenting education curriculum training. Grantees took a wide variety of approaches to hiring, which appeared to be linked to implementation outcomes in different domains. For example, a hiring preference for former corrections employees may have contributed to program integrity (via reduced turnover and fewer service interruptions), while a hiring preference for staff with relevant life experience and/or experience working with justice-involved families may have contributed to strong participant engagement.

Recruitment strategies that appeared to support positive implementation outcomes (particularly enrollment success) included drawing on the personal reputation of a charismatic instructor or program leader, cultivating a strong organizational reputation, encouraging word-of-mouth recruitment by former program participants (e.g., by involving them as peer leaders), and recruiting from an existing pool of people engaged in other services.

Several aspects of **service delivery** were also important for implementation success, particularly participant engagement. These included using learner-centered facilitation approaches (rather than heavy reliance on a traditional lecture format), committing to following through on promises to participants, and using personal stories to illustrate concepts.

Finally, **monitoring and adaptation** approaches that appeared to support implementation success included programs' ability to adapt to changes in institutional and community context and their ability to elicit and respond to participant feedback.

B.3 IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES

Each of the six outcomes of interest was identified as having several key dimensions.

Delivery of corrections-based services was defined by whether (and how quickly) grantees succeeded in establishing access to correctional facilities and how well they were able to maintain access to facilities for service delivery during years 1 through 4 of the grant period. Because all program models proposed by MFS-IP grantees included the delivery of some or all program components inside correctional facilities, securing and maintaining facility access was a crucial aspect of implementation success or failure. As described in Section 2 of the full report, the key factor associated with consistent corrections-based service delivery was bringing a strong institutional position to negotiations with correctional facility staff. This leverage with host facilities typically derived (in the case of correctional agency grantees) from a well-connected role in the correctional infrastructure, strong interorganizational respect (for community-based grantees) based on a history of collaboration, and/or on the recognition that MFS-IP services were helping the correctional agency or individual correctional facility meet its own goals.

Delivery of community-based services was defined by how well grantees succeeded in involving enrolled program participants in postrelease service components. Many grantees did not attempt to deliver postrelease services, and those that did often maintained (or developed) contact with only a small proportion of their participants following release from incarceration. Factors that supported community-based service delivery included

- strong commitment on the part of program leadership staff to delivering a community-based component;
- having an existing service delivery infrastructure in the community (e.g., community office space, a history of partnerships with community-based agencies);
- persistently pursuing partnerships with community-based agencies capable of providing high-priority services to participants; and
- for programs that enrolled participants after release from incarceration, recruiting participants from a pool of persons already engaged in some other community program (such as residential treatment).

Enrollment was assessed both in terms of absolute numbers enrolled in programming and in terms of whether grantees met their own self-defined enrollment targets. Wide differences in enrollment targets were evident between grantees with time-limited, lower-intensity service delivery models (typically those delivering a one-time relationship education retreat) and those with extended service delivery protocols involving multiple, individually tailored program components. Recruiting, screening, and enrolling large numbers of participants represented a distinct accomplishment for these demonstration grants, given the significant challenges many faced in those areas. Yet independent of absolute numbers, it is equally important to identify what enabled grantees to meet their own enrollment targets (even if low), because lower targets were tied to higher-intensity services and thus a higher commitment demanded of prospective participants. For this

reason, both dimensions were considered in identifying factors that contributed to enrollment success. As described in Section 4 of the main report, factors associated with strong enrollment included

- having a sufficiently broad catchment area (particularly in terms of facilities served) and eligibility criteria to allow access to large numbers of eligible couples;
- offering services that met high-priority needs for the target population, such as assisted visitation or reentry planning;
- offering services to partners that did not demand frequent in-person participation over a prolonged period;
- marketing the program effectively through charismatic staff, a strong organizational reputation, or word of mouth; and/or
- providing ample incentives for participation, such as institutional credit (toward time served) or financial assistance for children.

Program integrity was defined as the extent to which all planned program components became operational and service delivery was consistently maintained throughout the study period. Factors that supported program integrity included

- beginning with a program model that was consistent with OFA and partner agency requirements;
- building from existing, similar programs;
- having program leadership with experience implementing programs in the culture of correctional facilities; and
- preventing and ameliorating the effects of staff turnover.

Although challenges related to **participant engagement and retention** differed substantially depending on program duration and type of services, these constructs were explored across sites in terms of their success at sustaining participants' interest in program activities and in securing program completion. As described in Section 6 of the main report, approaches that supported participant retention in programs of longer duration included

- offering incentives at regular intervals (not just the start or end of the program);
- listening to participant feedback, delivering program offerings consistently, and following through on promises made to participants; and
- offering opportunities for one-on-one conversations with staff and opportunities to make up program content when a regular class session is missed.

Approaches that supported active engagement in program activities among participants, regardless of program duration, included

- choosing and adapting curricula to be relevant to participant needs and interests, and framing marriage and relationship education content to apply to nonromantic relationships;
- providing partners with assistance with child care, transportation, and facility access to enable their participation in program activities; and

- hiring program staff who could personally and sincerely relate to participants and providing substantial in-house training based on senior staff experience with justice-involved families.

Preparation for sustainability. Because implementation study data collection was completed at the end of year 4 of the 5-year funding period, it was not possible to assess whether programs were sustained beyond the initial OFA grant. However, a more proximal dimension of sustainability was examined: the extent to which grantees had identified other possible (non-OFA) sources of continuation funding and the extent to which they had explored strategies for maintaining some aspects of their MFS-IP program models (e.g., a particular service component or service approach) within their other work. As described in Section 7 of the main report, factors associated with the continuation of MFS-IP services without federal funding included

- a low-intensity, group-based service delivery model that could be scaled down for inexpensive delivery by volunteers or staff paid through other funding,
- an organizational mission to serve justice-involved families or a pre-grant history of providing such services, or
- a very strong reputation at all levels within the correctional institutions where they delivered services.

Appendix

C

Site-Specific Eligibility Criteria

Each grantee selected its own target population and established eligibility requirements. Table C-1 summarizes key information about the populations targeted by the MFS-IP grantees as of year 4 of their grants. Eligibility criteria refer to the definitions determining who was eligible to participate in programming delivered under MFS-IP funding. Among the grantees that offered multiple program components, several made the decision to establish separate eligibility criteria for the various components because the components were viewed as being relevant for different populations. Therefore, Table C-1 lists the eligibility criteria for each program component in sites in which the criteria differed across components.

Table C-1. Target Populations Served by MFS-IP Grantees

Site	Eligibility Criteria
Centerforce (CA)	Fathers incarcerated at a single state prison who were residing in a special program-oriented housing unit and who were within 1 year of release were eligible for dads-only parenting classes. Men who met the above criteria and who were in a committed intimate or co-parenting relationship were eligible to participate with their partners in the Couples Enhancement Workshops. Finally, men who met the additional criterion of planning to return to the five-county Bay area were eligible to participate in family reunification case management with their partners or individually, if the partner declined services but the men still planned to reunify with their partners or have contact with the family. Nonincarcerated fathers who were recently released from incarceration, participated in reentry programming at one of Centerforce's two partner agencies in Oakland, and did not have active restraining orders were eligible to participate with their partners in community-based Couples Enhancement Workshops.
CFSNH	Fathers of minor children who were incarcerated at one of two state prisons, had been free of any major disciplinary report for 90 days, and had not been convicted of a sex offense against a child 13 or under were eligible for dads-only parenting classes (and weekly support groups) and employment classes. Men who met the above criteria and who completed the parenting classes and weekly support groups were eligible for video visiting between fathers and children and for creation of audiobooks. Finally, men who met the additional criterion of being in a self-defined committed intimate relationship were eligible to participate in the relationship education classes, either with (couples PREP) or without (PREP with Absent Partners) their partners. Partners were also offered PREP in the community.
IDOC (IN)	All men incarcerated at 13 state prisons and who were residing in a character/faith-based living unit (PLUS) received dads-only parenting classes and healthy relationship classes (Prep for PREP). PLUS participants or graduates who were in a committed intimate relationship were eligible to participate with their partners in the couples PREP retreats. If additional slots were open, the PREP retreats were opened to participants in other special programming, including a fatherhood program, therapeutic communities, honor dorms, and participants in educational programming.
LSSSD	Fathers of minor children who were incarcerated at one of four state prisons, within 2 years of release, incarcerated for an offense other than domestic violence or sexual offenses, and free from an order of protection against them were eligible for the dads-only relationship education classes and other program components (case management and video diaries). Men who met the additional criterion of being in a self-defined, committed, intimate or co-parenting relationship with a woman who lived in South Dakota or within 100 miles of the state border were eligible to participate with their partners in the couples PREP retreats. Men who were identified as having an elevated risk for domestic violence at the initial screening had to complete a domestic violence education class before participating in other program components.

(continued)

Table C-1. Target Populations Served by MFS-IP Grantees (continued)

Site	Eligibility Criteria
MDDHR	In the Montgomery County site, fathers who were at least 18 years of age, who were residents in the county prerelease center targeted by the program, and who self-identified as being in a committed intimate or co-parenting relationship were eligible for the program. In the Adams House site, formerly incarcerated fathers who were at least 18 years of age were eligible for the program.
MNCCJ	Fathers of minor children who were admitted to the state prison system, were in a committed intimate relationship with a partner who agreed to participate in the program, were from and returning to the Twin Cities area, had 3 to 6 months left to serve, had no legal barriers to contact with their partner or family members, and had no convictions of a sex offense against a child were eligible to participate in the program with their partners. All program components were offered to men and their partners separately.
NJDOC	Fathers of minor children who were incarcerated at one of five state correctional facilities, were in a committed intimate or co-parenting relationship with a partner who agreed to participate in the program, were planning to be released without community supervision after serving their maximum sentences, and had 6 to 9 months left to serve were eligible to participate in the program with their partners. All program components were offered to men and their partners jointly except substance abuse education, which was offered to men only.
OLHSA (MI)	Fathers who were incarcerated at one state prison, were in a long-term committed intimate relationship, were returning to Oakland County, had not had parental rights terminated, did not have determined domestic violence issues, and were free from active personal protection orders filed against them were eligible to participate in parenting and relationship classes. Incarcerated men received dads-only classes, and their partners were offered relationship education classes and telephone contact in the community. Nonincarcerated fathers who were recently released from a correctional institution, were living in Oakland County, and met the relationship and legal criteria listed above were eligible for couples' relationship education workshops and, for graduates of the workshops, support groups.
Osborne (NY)	Fathers or men serving in a parental role for a minor child who were incarcerated at one of five state correctional facilities were eligible for dads-only parenting classes and cognitive behavioral training classes. Men who completed either course were then eligible for the dads-only healthy relationships course, with graduates of this course who met the additional eligibility criterion of being in a committed relationship then eligible to participate with their partners in a healthy relationship seminar.
RIDGE (OH)	Fathers who were incarcerated in one of the numerous state correctional facilities or the county treatment facility targeted by the program, in a verified committed romantic relationship, and not charged with a sex offense were eligible to participate in the program. Their partners were encouraged to participate in the program as well.
Shelby County DOC (TN)	Men who were incarcerated in a low-security unit of a county prison, were in a committed romantic relationship, and had 6 to 12 months left to serve were eligible to participate in the program, either with or without their partners.
TXPOP	Fathers who were incarcerated at one of the numerous state and federal correctional facilities targeted by the program and who were in a marital (including common law) relationship and parenting a child with their partners were eligible to participate in couples retreats with their partners. Additional restrictions for participation were imposed by the chaplains in some cases. Nonincarcerated men who were on parole or probation in West Texas and who met the above criteria were eligible to participate in couples retreats with their partners.

Note. PREP, Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program.

Appendix

D Site-Specific Recruitment Procedures

Grantees' approaches to recruiting their target populations are described in detail in Table D-1. As evident from the table, most grantees employed a combination of efforts to raise awareness about the programs and to reach out to potentially eligible men.

Table D-1. Recruitment Procedures Among MFS-IP Grantees

Site	Recruitment Procedures
Centerforce (CA)	Upon arrival at the housing unit targeted by the program, incarcerated men learned about available classes through a clerk who had been provided with marketing materials. Inmates also learned about the program during quarterly "Registration Days" at the unit, in which community agencies came together to advertise their programs. Interested men signed up for the parenting classes, received a class schedule, and filled out a registration form at the first class. Centerforce staff contacted the partners after the men had filled out the registration form and talked with their partners about the program. Centerforce case managers gave presentations about the couples' workshops and family reunification case management during the parenting classes. Formerly incarcerated men were referred by the partnering community-based agencies.
CFSNH	Incarcerated men learned about the program through word of mouth and advertisements (e.g., bulletin board postings, posters, program fairs). A formal process was also implemented at one of the prisons, in which fathers of minor children were identified through the reception and diagnostic process. The names of these men were given to program staff, who then contacted the men and explained the program. If the man chose to give his partner's name and contact information, a program facilitator contacted her and offered services, arranging a home visit to explain the program.
IDOC (IN)	All incarcerated men in the PLUS units received the dads-only parenting and healthy relationships classes as part of their core curricula. Recruitment for the couples retreats was done by the PLUS unit directors, who told the men about upcoming retreats and created a wait list of interested men whose partners had committed to attend. As necessary to fill the allotted slots, the unit directors then approached other eligible groups for participation, including PLUS graduates, men living in therapeutic communities, and participants in parenting programming.
LSSSD	Incarcerated men learned about the program at the orientation presentations delivered by unit case managers to all inmates admitted to the state correctional system, through word of mouth or other marketing efforts, including posters displayed in every unit and the distribution of dad's packets at orientation presentations. Interested men filled out an interest form at the orientation or submitted a request at a later time. After the men contacted their partners about potential participation, case managers contacted the partners to explain the program and determine their interest in participating.
MDDHR	In the Montgomery County site, Pre-release Center residents learned about the program during their orientations. Interested men filled out a form and were contacted for a one-on-one meeting with a program staff member, screened for domestic violence, and enrolled in the program. In the Adam's House site, men were referred to the program from family courts, local jails and prisons, or other community-based programs.
MNCCJ	Incarcerated men learned about the program at the orientation presentations delivered by the intake sergeant to all inmates admitted to the state correctional system or through presentations and other marketing efforts delivered at other prisons. Interested inmates filled out an application, which was then forwarded to CCJ staff for verification of eligibility. Eligible men were then interviewed by CCJ case managers, at which point they provided contact information for their partners. After the men contacted their partners about potential participation, CCJ case managers met with the partners and obtained their consent for participation, at which point both members were enrolled.

(continued)

Table D-1. Recruitment Procedures Among MFS-IP Grantees (continued)

Site	Recruitment Procedures
NJDOC	Potentially eligible men were identified using the NJDOC database (which contained information on several eligibility criteria) and invited to attend an orientation meeting where they learned about the program. Interested men filled out a prescreening form. If they met preliminary eligibility criteria, they were then contacted by a case manager to confirm eligibility and provide contact information for their partners. Once the case manager conducted an intake interview with the partner and the partner agreed to participate, both members were enrolled.
OLHSA (MI)	Incarcerated men from the target county (Oakland) were identified by prison staff and signed up to attend a recruiting session. At this session, program staff gave a presentation, and interested men completed intake paperwork and provided contact information for their partners, who were then contacted by program staff and offered the workshop. Formerly incarcerated men were recruited via flyers and posters in the target parole office and through presentations at the substance abuse treatment facility targeted by the program.
Osborne (NY)	Recruitment for parenting classes was conducted via presentations at inmate orientations, release planning group programs, and meetings of inmate organizations. Men who were interested notified program staff. Once enrolled in parenting classes, men then indicated their interest in healthy relationships classes, at which point an individual intake was scheduled. Recruitment for the healthy marriage seminars took place within the healthy relationships classes—men expressed their interest and then completed an individual intake, at which point partners were recruited for participation.
RIDGE (OH)	Incarcerated men learned about the program at presentations delivered periodically by RIDGE staff at the state prisons targeted by the program. Facility staff also marketed the program. Interested inmates filled out an application, which was then forwarded to RIDGE staff for verification of eligibility. Verification included contacting the partners to verify their relationship and inviting them to participate in classes.
Shelby County DOC (TN)	Incarcerated men learned about the program at the unit orientation held for new transfers or through other marketing materials posted in the unit. Interested men filled out a form and were screened for eligibility. Participants began with the fatherhood and economic stability class and were then recruited for the relationship education and child-friendly visitation components using a slide show presentation. When men enrolled in the program, they provided contact information for their partners, who were then invited by program staff to enroll.
TXPOP	Prison chaplains nominated men for the program and provided contact information for their partners to TXPOP staff, who recruited the partners for participation. Formerly incarcerated men were referred from parole officers or via flyers and posters posted in parole offices.

Appendix

E

Demographic Characteristics of MFS-IP Program Participants

De-identified, client-level data were provided to RTI by 11 MFS-IP grantees in year 3. RTI compiled a list of desired data elements, and grantees were asked to submit whatever data were available on these elements from the data they collected for their local evaluation or programmatic purposes. The requested data elements included demographic and family characteristics of participants as well as information on the type and dosage of several key services delivered to each client. Data were requested for male and female participants, and grantees were asked to submit data on all participants who had enrolled in their programs since the beginning of the grant period. Although seven programs submitted data on female partners, much of the information was incomplete. Therefore, the data presented in this appendix represent men only. In addition, many of the requested data elements could not be provided by grantees or were missing for a large number of clients. Therefore, the figures that follow should be interpreted with caution, given the extent of missing data.

Table E-1 presents information on the racial/ethnic composition of the male participants served by the programs, which was provided by 11 programs. In seven programs, participants were predominately African-American, with some sites reporting large majorities of African-American participants (92 percent at Shelby County DOC [TN] and 75 percent at NJDOC). Three programs served mostly White men (CFSNH, IDOC [IN], and LSSSD). NJDOC and Osborne (NY) served the highest percentages of Hispanic/Latino participants (23 percent and 25 percent, respectively). Native Americans constituted a substantial minority of participants served through LSSSD (24 percent). Some sites had large percentages of missing data on their participants' race/ethnicity (38 percent from LSSSD and 33 percent from MDDHR) due to differences in intake procedure.

Table E-1. Racial/Ethnic Background of Male Participants in MFS-IP Sites (Compared with Overall Corresponding State Prison or County Jail Population)[a]

Grantee	% Black or African American	% Hispanic/ Latino	% White or Caucasian	% Some Other Race/Multiple Races	% Unknown
Centerforce (CA) (*n*=173)	45 (29)	15 (41)	16 (24)	6 (6)	19
CFSNH (*n*=711)	8 (6)	11 (N/A)	70 (85)	4 (9)	8
IDOC (IN) (*n*=758)	54 (37)	3 (4.6)	42 (58)	<1 (1)	<1
LSSSD (*n*=1,259)	8 (6)	5 (3)	46 (61)	36 (30)	4
MDDHR (*n*=483)	66 (72)	9 (N/A)	19 (27)	5 (<1)	1
MNCCJ (*n*=135)	68 (36)	4 (7)	20 (53)	7 (12)	1
NJDOC (*n*=333)	73 (61)	17 (16)	9 (22)	1 (1)	<1
OLHSA (MI) (*n*=812)	46 (N/A)	3 (N/A)	42 (44)	5 (N/A)	4
Osborne (NY) (*n*=348)	65 (51)	25 (25)	7 (22)	2 (N/A)	1
RIDGE (OH) (*n*=1,971)	62 (47)	6 (N/A)	27 (51)	3 (2)	2
Shelby County DOC (*n*=132)	92 (86)	2 (1)	6 (13)	N/A	0

Note. N/A, not available.

[a] Values contained in parentheses indicate the estimated racial/ethnic distribution of each state's entire prison population as a means of demonstrating that program participation is generally representative of the overall inmate population. These data were gathered from each state's Department of Correction's annual statistical report regarding the most recent year for which data were available.

Source: Program Participant Administrative data submitted by MFS-IP grantees in year 3. Inmate population data gathered from state Departments of Correction Annual Statistical Reports.

As shown in Table E-2, the average participant age across programs ranged from 29 to 37 years old. Centerforce (CA), IDOC (IN), and Osborne (NY) reported the oldest participants, whereas NJDOC participants were the youngest.

Table E-2. Age of Male Participants in MFS-IP Sites (Compared with Greater State Prison Population)

Grantee	Average Age in Years (Ave. Age of State Prison Pop.)	% Missing Data
Centerforce (CA) (*n*=173)	37 (38)	2%
CFSNH (*n*=711)	34 (N/A)	2%
IDOC (IN) (*n*=758)	36 (37)	0%
LSSSD (*n*=1,259)	31 (N/A)	4%
MDDHR (*n*=483)	34 (N/A)	57%
MNCCJ (*n*=135)	31 (36)	7%
NJDOC (*n*=333)	31 (34)	0%
OLHSA (MI) (*n*=812)	36 (N/A)	1%
Osborne (NY) (*n*=348)	37 (37)	1%
RIDGE (OH) (*n*=1,971)	32 (37)	0%
Shelby County DOC (*n*=132)	29 (33)	7%

Note. N/A, not available.

Table E-3 displays information on relationship status, partner participation, and parental status among the men served by the grantees during the five year service delivery period represented in their administrative data, although much of the data were missing. A surprising number of sites reported large percentages of participants who were not married or in a committed relationship. This pattern is perhaps explained by the fact that many grantees allowed men to participate in parenting classes or other program components even if they were not in an intimate relationship. The extent of partner enrollment varied widely across sites, from 100% at MNCCJ to 9% at MDDHR. Fatherhood status also varied across the programs, although less so than relationship status and partner enrollment. In 5 of the 10 programs, at least 90% of participants had children. Once again, some grantees had a large amount of missing data on the elements shown in Table 3-6, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions.

Table E-3. Relationship Status, Partner Participation, and Children

	Relationship Status				Partner Participation		Children	
Grantee	% Married	% in a Committed Relationship	% Not in a Committed Relationship	% Unknown	% Partner Enrolled	% Unknown	% with Children	% Unknown
Centerforce (CA) (*n*=173)	31	16	39	14	12	1	96	2
CFSNH (*n*=711)	19	21	45	15	13	0	84	9
LSSSD (*n*=1,259)	22	35	37	6	N/A	100	100	0
MDDHR (*n*=483)	17	22	61	<1	9	0	81	0
MNCCJ (*n*=135)	16	68	N/A	16	100	0	92	8
NJDOC (*n*=333)	11	62	27	1	84	0	100	0
OLHSA (MI) (*n*=812)	57	29	1	13	20	0	90	1
Osborne (NY) (*n*=348)	25	7	25	42	14	86	70	21
RIDGE (OH) (*n*=1,971)	21	25	50	4	34	0	96	0
Shelby County DOC (TN) (*n*=132)	N/A	N/A	N/A	100	N/A	100	82	0

Note. N/A, not available.

Source: Administrative data collected from grantees.