

THE NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY STRENGTHENING GRANTS FOR INCARCERATED AND RE-ENTERING FATHERS AND THEIR PARTNERS



PROGRAM MODELS OF MFS-IP GRANTEES

Introduction

This brief presents detailed information on recipients of the Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and Their Partners (MFS-IP): the context of their operations, the populations that they serve, and their program models. The data are based on phone conversations, site visit interviews with key program staff, and document review, and they reflect the status of the currently funded programs¹ as of August 2008—just before the end of the second year of funding.

The MFS-IP programs are part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF) initiative to support healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood. Grantees provide marriage-strengthening education and other services, such as in-prison visitation support, parenting classes, and employment assistance to promote the economic stability of the family. No one program model is required for MFS-IP grantees, and the sites vary widely in terms of program components and service delivery approach.

The National Evaluation of the MFS-IP programs is a joint initiative of ACF's Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE). Conducted by RTI International, the evaluation will describe program implementation among all sites and assess impact in selected sites. Characteristics including program design, target population, and interagency collaboration are being documented in detail, because very

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH BRIEF

This brief describes the context in which Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and their Partners (MFS-IP) are operating, the populations served by the programs, and the program models in use among the grantees. This brief and other publications related to the MFS-IP evaluation are available on the ASPE website at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/08/MFS-IP/index.htm>.

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¹ Of the fourteen sites to which OFA made Responsible Fatherhood Priority Area 5 awards, twelve were funded as of the beginning of Year 3.

little is known about the delivery and effectiveness of marriage- and family-strengthening programs for populations involved with the criminal justice system.

Program Context

Type of Agency. Table 1 presents basic contextual information for each of the MFS-IP programs. Both public and private agencies have been funded under this initiative; the public agencies represent both correctional and human services agencies, and the private agencies include both community- and faith-based organizations.

Table 1. Funded Sites and Type of Grantee Agency

Site	Location	Type of Grantee Agency
Centerforce	San Rafael, CA	Community-based nonprofit
Child and Family Services of New Hampshire (NH CFS)	Manchester, NH	State human services agency
Indiana Department of Correction (IN DOC)	Indianapolis, IN	State correctional agency
Lutheran Social Services of South Dakota (SD LSS)	Sioux Falls, SD	Faith-based organization
Maryland Department of Human Resources (MD DHR)	Baltimore, MD	State human services agency
Minnesota Council on Crime and Justice (MN CCJ)	Minneapolis, MN	Community-based nonprofit
New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJ DOC)	Trenton, NJ	State correctional agency
Oakland Livingston Human Services Association (OLHSA)	Pontiac, MI	Community-based nonprofit
Osborne Association	Brooklyn, NY	Community-based nonprofit
Texas Arms of Love, d.b.a. People of Principle (TX POP)	Odessa, TX	Community-based nonprofit
RIDGE Project (OH RIDGE)	Defiance, OH	Community-based nonprofit
Shelby County Division of Correction (SC DOC)	Memphis, TN	County correctional agency

Agency type may have implications for its control over corrections-based programming. For non-correctional agencies, access to programming space, programming time, recruitment contact with inmates, clearance for program staff, and available corrections data (e.g., release date, transfer plans) on the target population may be limited—all of which are potentially substantial implementation challenges. Such agencies, however, could also have an advantage over corrections-based programs in participant recruitment and retention, if inmates (and their families) are more likely to trust service providers who are independent of the criminal justice system.

Program Entry Point. A major component of the program structure is the point in the criminal justice system at which the target population enters the program. Based on this dimension, the programs can be classified into two types, as shown in Figure 1.

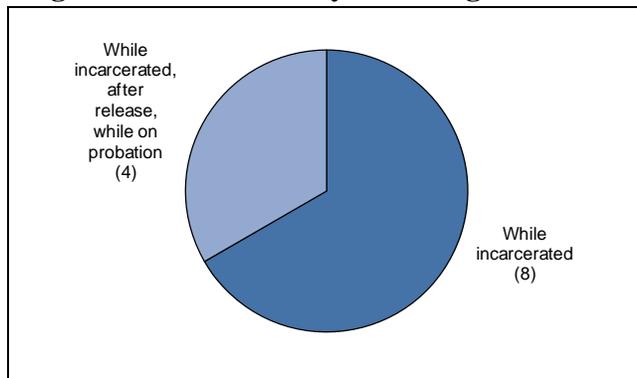
The first type, which includes eight programs, only enrolls currently incarcerated men and their partners. All of these programs enroll men while they are incarcerated and provide services during incarceration. Most continue to provide services in the community for participants who are released from incarceration.

The second type of program (four sites) has multiple entry points. These programs concurrently enroll incarcerated men, formerly incarcerated men, and men who are serving a probation term (regardless of whether they have been incarcerated) and their partners into their programs.

This distinction between enrolling only incarcerated men and enrolling both incarcerated men

and men in the community introduces substantial diversity of service needs and institutional experiences in the target population.

Figure 1. Point of Entry into Program



Type of Correctional Institution. Whether the programs are jail-based or prison-based is another key component. Jail inmates have shorter sentences and are more likely to be incarcerated in the county in which the offense was committed. This distinction could have implications for the impact of the incarceration on the target population, particularly the family, given the likely influence of physical distance and time on factors such as frequency of visitation and maintenance of family support. Institution

type also has implications for the delivery structure of the program, because jail-based programs have a greater need to rapidly identify eligible respondents and face limitations in the duration of pre-release services they are able to deliver. Prison-based programs, however, have to deal with frequent institutional transfers and inmates' participation in other programs (or completion of other requirements).

The distribution of the MFS-IP grantees by institutional type (Figure 2) finds one classified as an exclusively jail-based program (MD DHR), including county detention and pre-release centers. Ten are classified as exclusively prison-based programs, although one of these programs (SC DOC), is a county prison which has some characteristics of a jail. One program (OLHSA) serves both jails and prisons, in addition to a non-corrections-based residential treatment facility to which jail inmates and state prisoners with substance abuse problems are often transferred during the last 60-90 days of their sentences.

Figure 2. Type of Correctional Institution

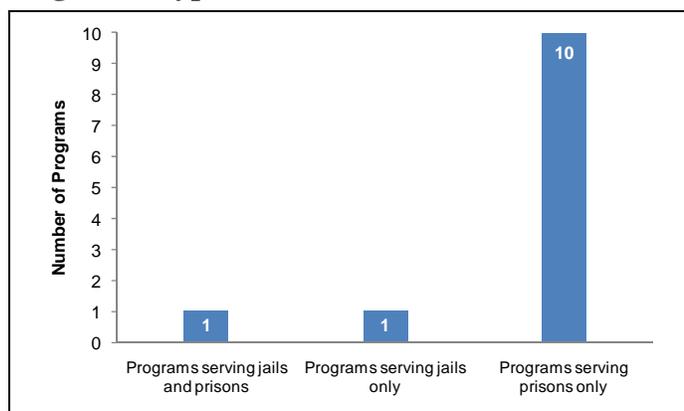
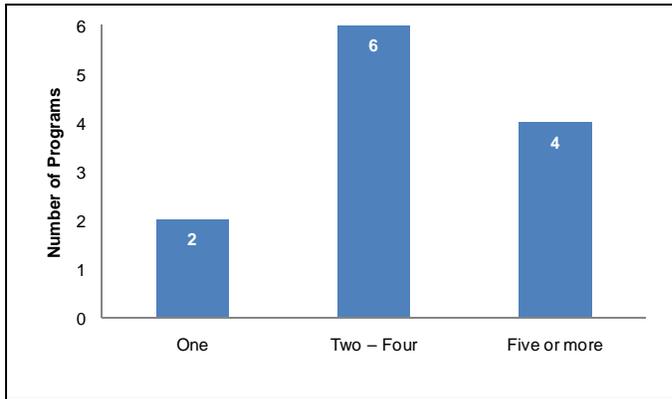


Figure 3. Number of Institutions Served



Number of Institutions Served. Some grantees concentrate on a single institution; others spread resources across multiple facilities. The former approach may simplify staffing, facility access negotiations, and other logistical considerations. The latter offers a larger pool of eligible participants. As shown in Figure 3, most grantees are planning to serve more than one correctional facility—typically four or fewer facilities, with the exceptions of IN DOC (13) and RIDGE (11).

Target Population

The population targeted by the program reflects program goals and priorities, service needs, and logistical considerations, and there is substantial variation across this dimension.

Federal Requirements. There are three federal requirements for the target population. Because the grants are funded under the Responsible Fatherhood provisions of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, program participation (either in its entirety or for specific program components) is targeted to inmates who are fathers.² Based on the grant announcement, the inmate must be in a current committed relationship, and services must be provided to both the inmate and his partner. Sites do not restrict participation to married couples, and very few require that the couples have a child in common. The female partners receive some services in each site; although the partners are typically recruited after the inmates and often do not receive the same package of services as the male inmates. The subsequent discussion also reflects that inmates (or former inmates) are the “primary” program participants in that they are recruited first, must meet program eligibility criteria, and generally receive more services.

General or Special Populations. The majority of the programs target the general inmate population; three programs target a special population. In these programs

(Table 2), MFS-IP services are typically delivered in the context of a larger effort. IN DOC and Centerforce target residents in specialized housing units at the prison(s) served. In both, the target population will receive character- or skills-based programming and services provided by the MFS-IP grant. NJDOC targets “max-out” offenders who are serving their full maximum sentences and therefore will be released without any community supervision. Because a large proportion of these offenders have a history of substance abuse problems, MFS-IP participants are required to take part in a substance abuse treatment course in addition to services delivered through the grant.

Table 2. Special Populations Served

Site	Population Served
Centerforce	STAND UP participants
IN DOC	Purposeful Living Units Serve (PLUS) residents
NJ DOC	Max-out offenders

² Grantees are required to make services available to eligible mothers as well as fathers.

Targeting Release Date. As shown in Figure 4, six grantees provide services at any point during an individual’s sentence and do not restrict programming based on a certain minimum or maximum duration of incarceration. Six programs target individuals who remain incarcerated for a minimum time or who will be released within a certain time period. Setting an “upper limit” on time to release (e.g., inmates must have no more than 12 months left to serve) ensures that there is sufficient time to deliver the planned post-release services and to focus resources on individuals who will be reunited with their families during the period of service delivery. The use of a “lower limit” on time to release (e.g., inmates must have at least 6 months left to serve) ensures that the participants will have enough time in the facility to participate in the full program. Participants may be more motivated if programming occurs when the possibility of release is imminent, but program effects may be stronger if couples receive help early in the period of incarceration. Whether a program targets a population of inmates expected to be released within a certain time may also reflect a desire to deliver marriage- and family-strengthening programs within a broader set of reentry services.

Figure 4. Release Date Used as an Eligibility Criterion?

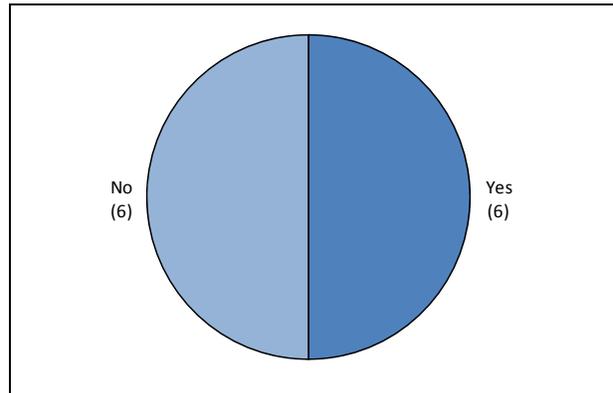
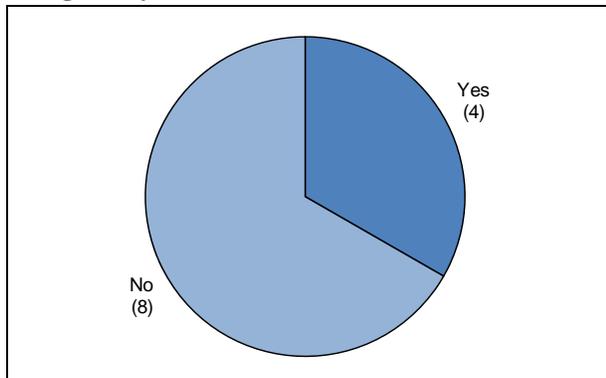


Figure 5. County of Residence Used as an Eligibility Criterion



Geographic Coverage. Some grantees have used geographic factors to identify target populations (Figure 5). This is particularly important for prison-based programs planning to provide services in the community for partners, concurrent with the men’s programming in prison and/or post-release services. Unlike county jails, most prisons do not house individuals geographically connected to the county in which the prison is located. Therefore, prison-based programs with a community component have likely considered restricting participation based on geographical

criteria. All four of the MFS-IP programs that limit participation of incarcerated individuals to those from a particular geographical area have a community-based component.

Program Models

An important goal of the MFS-IP evaluation is to document the various service delivery approaches of the grantees. All sites, for example, plan to deliver some type of formal marriage education curriculum, usually a stand-alone course, delivered to the couple jointly or separately. The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) is the most common curriculum (Table 3). In addition, almost all grantees plan to deliver parenting courses, typically to the male participant. There is substantial variability, however, in the other services offered and the modality of the service provision.

About three-quarters of the sites offer services such as case management and/or couples counseling (classified very inclusively). Fewer than half of the programs offer an employment component, assistance with visitation, and/or support groups. Services offered in a few sites include financial literacy, education, moral reconnection therapy, substance abuse treatment, domestic violence treatment, or mentoring programs for children.

The grantees also differ in the point at which services are delivered.

MN CCJ begins corrections-based services immediately upon intake to prison; other programs either enroll incarcerated individuals within a specific time before release or, more commonly, at any point during incarceration. Eight programs offer some post-release services; case management is the most common.

The variability among the sites on programmatic components and delivery format is a necessary requirement for the identification of programmatic models that distinguish sites from one another. In classifying the sites into a small set of meaningful program models, it was evident that the most substantial sources of variation among the programs pertained to the scope and delivery format of services provided to program participants. In this classification, “scope” refers to whether the program focuses exclusively on healthy relationship and parenting services or includes, as part of its core programming, a broad set of services relevant to the target population (e.g., reentry services, employment readiness, substance abuse treatment, and other services). “Delivery format” refers to whether the program is primarily curriculum based or employs case management or other individualized services (e.g., family counseling or “coaching” services) in addition to some core curricula.

Based on a combination of these two key dimensions (scope and delivery format), the programs were classified into three primary models: (1) curriculum-based programs focused on family strengthening, (2) curriculum-based programs with some case management or family counseling, and (3) case management-based programs with a holistic focus. It is important to note that the three program models—subsequently described in more detail—do not reflect program quality or intensity. All three models have advantages and were thoughtfully chosen by the grantees to reflect the needs of the target population, taking into consideration existing services available and the climate within which the programs are implemented. In addition, it is important to note that program classification may evolve over time, as grantees refine their plans because of early implementation experiences.

Table 3. Marriage Education Curricula Used among MFS-IP Grantees

Curriculum	No. of Sites*
Caring for My Family	1
Couple Communication	1
Exploring Healthy Relationships and Marriage with Fragile Families	1
Married and Loving It!	1
The Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS)	1
Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)	7
Non-commercial curriculum developed in house	1

*Note: The number of programs exceeds 12 because one program is delivering two curricula.

Model 1: Curriculum-Based Programs Focused on Family Strengthening

Three programs are curriculum based, delivering strong curricula that focus on healthy relationships and/or parenting. These programs tend to have large enrollment targets (particularly the TX POP and IN DOC sites) and plan to deliver services in multiple correctional institutions. None of them have a post-release component planned, and the primary way in which partners will be involved is through the couples' healthy relationship course. The programs are focusing their grant resources on relationship and parenting services as a complement to the existing services available to the target population.

Model 1: Curriculum-Based Programs Focused on Family Strengthening

IN DOC delivers PREP to men residing in PLUS housing units and a PREP couples retreat to the subset of PLUS residents who are in committed relationships. The program also includes a parenting class as part of its MFS-IP programming.

MD DHR delivers the Exploring Healthy Relationships and Marriage with Fragile Families curriculum and a parenting course to incarcerated or formerly incarcerated fathers. Men receive the healthy relationships course jointly with their partners or spouses.

TX POP provides a couples retreat to incarcerated fathers and their partners recruited from prisons, probation and parole offices, and community groups. The curriculum, delivered either inside the correctional facilities or in community meeting spaces, combines PREP with supplemental modules developed in house by TX POP.

Model 2: Curriculum-Based Programs with Some Case Management or Family Counseling:

Centerforce delivers the in-house relationship and parenting curriculum Back to the Family (BTF) separately to men and their partners and provides family reunification case management to couples who have completed the BTF courses. The case management is broad based and focuses on general reentry needs; it begins 3 months prior to release and extends to 6 months after release.

NH CFS delivers PREP to couples (and fathers without partners), a parenting curriculum to men, and up to ten sessions of family reentry counseling as needed to participants who are within 6 months of release.

Osborne Association provides a parenting course for incarcerated fathers, a healthy relationships course for incarcerated fathers who are in committed relationships, and a PREP course for couples. The program also facilitates father-child skills-building activities at Children's Centers in the prisons and offers couples counseling to participating men and their partners.

RIDGE includes several relationship and parenting curricula (including Couple Communication and Keeping FAITH) available to both members of the couple, support groups, and the services of a life coach who assists with visitation and other relationship activities. Support services are also available to participants.

Model 2: Curriculum-Based Programs with Some Case Management or Family Counseling

Each of the four programs characterized under this model provides a healthy relationship and/or parenting curriculum, along with a moderate degree of individualized services including case management or family counseling. "Moderate" means either that case management or family counseling is available as needed (or to a subset of participants) or that a small number of case management or family counseling sessions are provided to all program participants as part of the program. In this categorization, case management and family counseling were conceptualized in a very inclusive fashion (e.g., family counseling may include "coaching," mediated visitation, and so forth in addition to formal marriage or relationship counseling). When factoring in the scope of services delivered—

specifically, whether they focus on relationship/parenting services or on a broader set of support services—some of the Model 2 programs focus primarily on relationships and parenting (with all of the services delivered through MFS-IP funding, including case management or family counseling services, generally focused on relationship strengthening). Others focus on more general service needs such as assistance with reentry into the community.

Model 3: Holistic Case Management–Based Programs

Five grantees offer holistic case management-based programs. “Holistic” means that, although the focus is on services that directly strengthen families, the programs offer a wide variety of other services to strengthen families in more indirect ways (e.g., enhance financial stability, prevent substance abuse, improve housing quality).

These programs include healthy relationship and/or parenting curricula, but they use many of their resources to deliver broad-based services and case management. In the majority of Model 3 programs, a wide variety of services are available to interested participants. The intensity of case management varies widely across sites in terms of frequency of sessions, duration of services after release, and whether case management is a core program component for all participants (including partners). Diversity is also evident in the breadth of ancillary services offered across sites and the involvement of partners in programming. Some sites deliver all services to partners, and others focus on the male participant.

Given the intensity and breadth of services delivered, these programs tend to have lower enrollment targets than the other MFS-IP programs.

Model 3: Holistic Case Management-Based Programs

MN CCJ provides intensive case management to men and partners at the point of program enrollment (which occurs shortly after intake into prison) and continuing for 1 year after release. Both members of the couple receive regular case management and couples counseling as needed in addition to the curriculum-based services offered by the program (including PREP, parenting classes, employment classes, and financial literacy classes).

NJ DOC provides case management (focusing on assistance with visitation, family counseling, the development of a substance abuse plan, and reentry planning) to program participants in addition to a marriage education course (Married and Loving It!), which includes a parenting skills component. Participants are followed up from the time of enrollment through 6 months after release.

OLHSA offers PREP and Caring for My Family courses, Love and Logic parenting classes, support groups, and family counseling. Couples receive case management (including needs assessment, referral and follow-up) to address broad-based service needs and reentry issues and to facilitate family strengthening and reunification.

SD LSS delivers a couples PREP course and provides relationship and reentry-focused case management to all participating couples, consisting of two pre-release case-management visits and three post-release visits conducted within 6 months of release. For eligible men assessed as being at high risk for domestic violence, a 26-week batterer re-education course is provided.

SC DOC includes several curriculum-based components (PAIRS, parenting education, employment skills and certification, moral reconnection therapy, intensive GED instruction and higher education courses), and individualized services such as case management and family group conferencing.

Conclusion

MFS-IP grantees have designed and implemented 12 innovative programs serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men, their partners, and their children. This brief reflects the early stages of implementation, and programs will continue to evolve as they become fully operational. The programs were developed based on the needs of their specific populations, available existing services, and the contexts in which they were to operate. As a result, the implemented programs vary widely.

Program scope and delivery format dimensions suggest three distinct models: curriculum-based programs focused on family strengthening (three sites), curriculum-based programs with some case management or family counseling (four sites), and holistic case management–based programs (five sites). This variation in program design will enable the national evaluation to examine whether key implementation factors differ by program model. Data on service delivery, target population and enrollment, implementation challenges, and successes will be gathered on an annual basis through site visits, ongoing phone contact, and document review. These data will indicate whether programs of a certain type tend to experience similar implementation challenges that affect their ability to meet enrollment targets and will help to identify common solutions to programmatic barriers encountered during the start-up and full-implementation phases of the projects. This information will add to the knowledge base about the delivery of marriage- and family-strengthening services in correctional settings and will be of interest to agencies or organizations designing similar programs for correctional populations.

For additional information about the MFS-IP Evaluation, contact Anupa Bir: (781) 434-1708, abir@rti.org; or Christine Lindquist: (919) 485-5706, lindquist@rti.org.

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