



**Learning Community Webinar: September 22, 2015**

Fatherhood  
Research  
& Practice  
Network

**Engaging Mothers and  
Improving Co-parenting  
Among Unmarried Parents**

[www.frpn.org](http://www.frpn.org)

## Key Team Members & Committees



### ▶ Temple University

- *Jay Fagan, PhD, Project Co-Director*
- *Rebecca Kaufman MSW, Senior Research Coordinator*



### ▶ Center for Policy Research

- *Jessica Pearson, PhD, Project Co-Director*
- *Nancy Thoennes, PhD, Project Consultant*



### ▶ University of Pennsylvania, National Center on Fathers and Families

- *Vivian Gadsden, Ed.D.*

### ▶ The Bawmann Group, Denver, Colorado

- *Marketing communications firm with experience developing materials and strategies to reach fathers.*

### ▶ 40 leading fatherhood practitioners and researchers

- *Steering committee and workgroups dealing with economic security, responsible fatherhood, co-parenting and communications*



## Overview of FRPN

- ▶ Five-year, \$4.8 million grant (#90PR0006) to Temple University funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Oct 2013-Sept 2018.
- ▶ **#1:** Promote rigorous evaluation of fatherhood programs that serve low-income populations nationwide.  
Four awards in Round I; RFP for Round #2: Jan. 2016.
- ▶ **#2:** Provide training and technical assistance to researchers and practitioners to conduct better quality evaluations.  
Webinars, preconference workshops leading to Temple certificate for practitioners
- ▶ **#3:** Disseminate information that leads to effective fatherhood practice and research.  
[www.frpn.org](http://www.frpn.org): Research briefs, measures for low-income, non-resident fathers, new research publications, list serve sign-up, electronic newsletter

## Contact Us

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## Why a Webinar on Engaging Mothers & Co-Parenting for Fatherhood Programs?

- Children born to unmarried parents are more likely to experience negative outcomes for health and wellbeing, in part because of low father involvement
- Mother-father relationship quality and residential status are among the most consistent predictors of father involvement
- Paternal involvement is greater among fathers described by mothers as supportive partners, regardless of marital status
- Couples can have positive co-parenting relationships even when they are no longer romantically involved or living together
- As families change, a strong interparental relationship can mediate the effects of marital status and father's residential status on father involvement
- Efforts to improve father involvement should focus on improving co-parenting skills—how they manage conflict and collaborate
- Supportive and low conflict co-parenting relationships are associated with positive child outcomes

# Today's Panel



**Paul Florsheim,  
PhD**

**Professor**

**Zilber School of  
Public Health**

**University of  
Wisconsin  
Milwaukee**



**Leondra Davis**

**Family PACT  
Coshocton, Ohio**

**24/7 Dads**

**Understanding  
Dads**

**Mom as  
Gateway**



**Judy Williams**

**Action for  
Children**

**Columbus, Ohio**

**Father Factor  
and  
Mothers  
Matter**



**Anthony J.  
Mingo, Sr.**

**Richmond  
Family and  
Fatherhood  
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**VA Dept of  
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Richmond City  
Health District**

**NPCL**



**Tauchanna  
Gregory**

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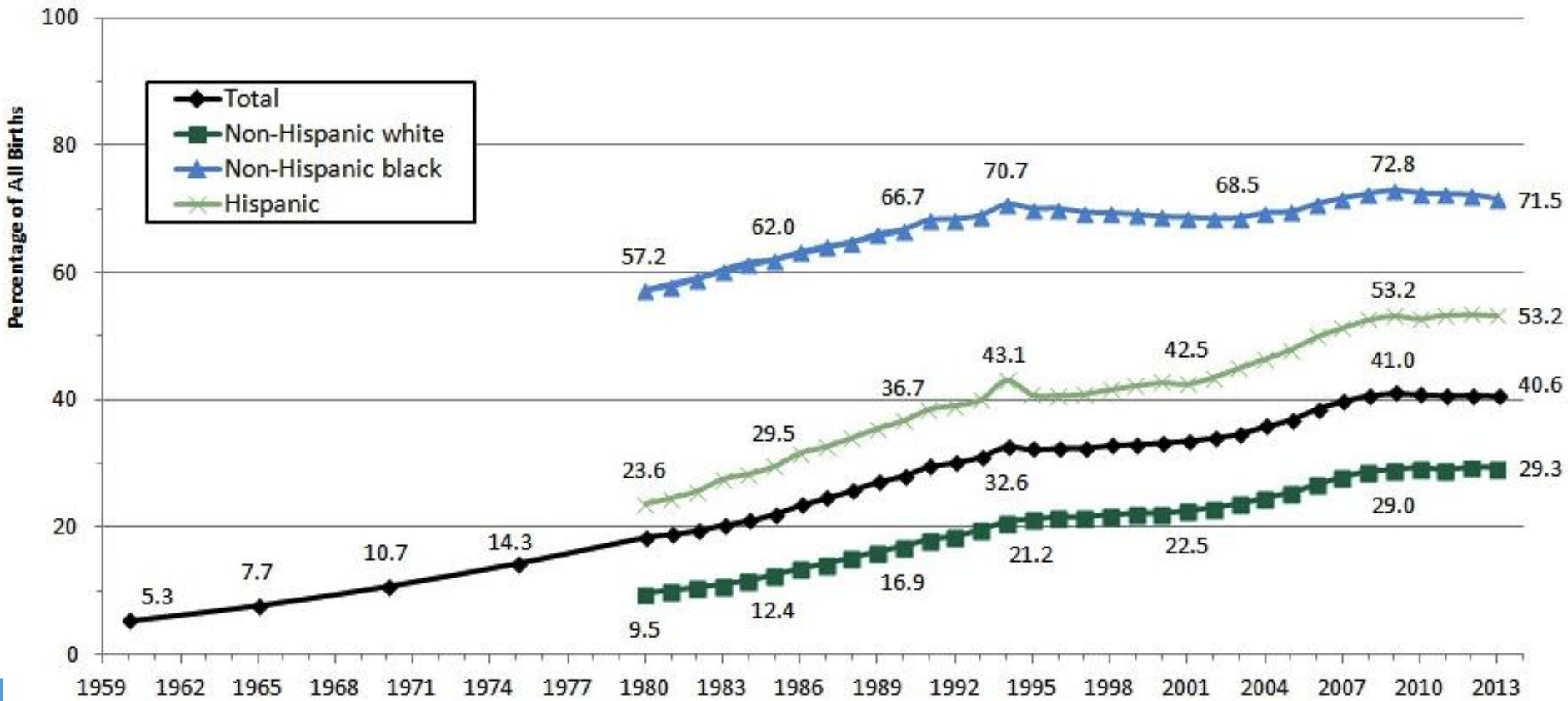
**NPCL**



# Changes in the Structure and Definition of Family. Data Compiled by Child Trends, 2015

Figure 1

## Percentage of All Births that Were to Unmarried Women, by Race and Hispanic Origin: Selected Years, 1960-2013



# Staying Focused in the Blurry World of Family Relations

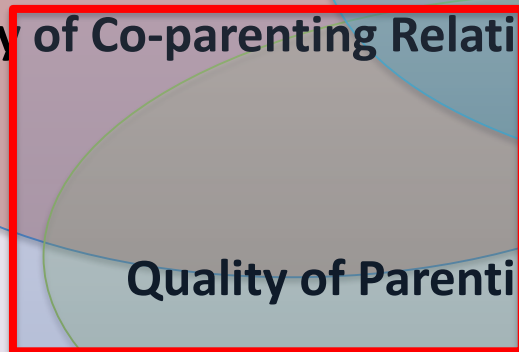
## Social & Cultural Factors

Quality of Relations with Extended Family Members

Quality of Couples' Romantic Relations

Quality of Co-parenting Relations

Quality of Parenting & Parent-Child Relations





# Progress toward effective co-parenting interventions for unmarried couples?



## **Building Strong Families Study results were disappointing**

- Few positive effects...some negative findings
- Poor attendance/retention
- Psychological distress among participants

## **Several smaller studies have been more promising**

- Decreased hostility between co-parents (Florsheim et al., 2011; 2012; McHale et al. 2015)
- Increased alliance/support between co-parents (Fagan, 2008; McHale et al., 2015)
- Increased father involvement in parenting (Fagan, 2008; Florsheim, 2012)





## Why has progress been so slow?

- 1. Changes in family structure are monumental**
- 2. Co-parenting support services not “owned” by healthcare institutions**
- 3. Co-parenting/Fatherhood interventions start too late**
- 4. Co-parenting interventions overly focused on couples’ romantic relationships**
- 5. Multi-couple groups are difficult to sustain**

## Next steps in promoting co-parenting interventions?

### 1. Focus on recruitment and retention

- Provide an incentive
- Recruit fathers through mothers
- Use natural “windows of opportunity”

### 2. Integrate co-parenting counseling/education with other modes of intervention

- Prenatal
- Pediatric
- Early Childhood Education

### 3. Focus on positive relationship skills for addressing co-parenting concerns specific to individual couples



## Presenter

**Leondra Davis**  
**Family PACT**  
**Coshocton,**  
**Ohio**  
**24/7 Dads**  
**Understanding**  
**Dads**  
**Mom as**  
**Gateway**

### Program Overview

- Since 2006 Family PACT and the Coshocton County Fatherhood Initiative has provided mediation, supervised visits, and parent education services to the fathers and mothers in our rural community of Coshocton Ohio.
- We provide services to approximately 166 fathers/year. Fathers obtain access to our programming through school programs, word of mouth, CSEA, court, counseling services or various other social services areas.

### Working with Mothers

- Mothers are recruited the through the same venues as fathers: day care centers, schools, churches and CSEA.
- Participation is voluntary except for those who violate court visitation orders.
- We serve approximately 112 mothers in a year.
- Services focus primarily on how to communicate with fathers and how to support positive involvement between fathers and their children.
- PACT is training staff in social services agencies on Mom as Gateway to generate referrals.

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**Family PACT**

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**Understanding  
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## Co-parenting Intervention

- 24/7 Dad is an interactive program for dads with 2 male facilitators. This program consists of 12 two-hour sessions.
- Understanding Dad is an interactive program for moms with a male and female facilitator. This program consists of 8 two-hour sessions.
- Mom As Gateway is also an interactive program for mothers that has 4 two-hour sessions
- Foundations is an one hour, hands on session for new and first time fathers.
- Framework in and interactive program with one or two facilitators that consists of 6 two-hour sessions for fathers.

## Domestic Violence and Safety

- Domestic violence screening happens when referrals are submitted.
- The referring agency will provide all the information they have and the participants are screened prior to the start of programming.
- For safety precautions, our facility is fully alarmed and located next to the local sheriff department

## Benefits and Challenges

- Many fathers have become actively involved, parents are communicating better, and the children have access to two happy functional parents.
- Some of the challenges are that many view the programming as something that says they are bad parents, or feel like participating in the programming is punitive in some way. We are slowly changing that view as more and more parents participate in the programming.

## Presenters

**Judy Williams**

**Action for  
Children  
Columbus,  
Ohio  
Father Factor  
and  
Mothers  
Matter**

### **Program Overview**

Action for Children founded in 1972

- Located in Columbus, OH; serving 7 central Ohio counties

TAPP: Father Factor implemented in 2009

- Serve 8 counties; 250 Fathers served each year
- 13 hour curriculum over nine weeks
- Case management and supportive services included (e.g., child support, custody, etc.)
- Classes held in community, correctional facilities, and faith based organizations
- Classes available in English and Spanish
- To date, all classes have been contract-funded

### **Working with Mothers**

TAPP: Mothers Matter implemented in 2013

- 12 hour curriculum over eight weeks
- To date, all classes have been fee-based
- Mothers recruited independent of Father Factor program via social media and marketing at public locations (e.g., libraries, outreach events, etc.)



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## Co-parenting Intervention

Unique approach to co-parenting

- Co-parenting skills taught via course curricula (Father Factor, Mothers Matter, Parents Who Parent Separately)
- Classes customized to situations/challenges experienced by participants
- When offered concurrently, Mothers Matter and Father Factor class participants come together for co-parenting session (note: they do not parent the same child/ren)

## Domestic Violence and Safety

- Safety in classes: co-parents attend separate classes
- Intake process and case management provide opportunities to identify potential victims and perpetrators
- Share and refer to community resources
- In process: enhanced screening tools and facilitator training

## Benefits and Challenges

Benefits

- Participants gain insight and deeper understanding through the eyes of someone else's co-parent; more objective when less personal
- When one parent has a good experience in a class, they refer the other parent to the class

Challenges

- Funding
- Initial engagement for participation (basic needs, parent education stigma, complex lives)

## Presenter

**Anthony Mingo  
& Tauchanna  
Gregory  
Richmond  
Family and  
Fathers  
Virginia  
Department of  
Health**

## Program Overview

- Richmond Family and Fatherhood Initiative (RFFI) was founded by the Virginia Department of Health / Richmond City Health District's Director Dr. Donald Stern in 2007
- RFFI provides Family and Fatherhood resources and technical assistance to our Community Partners, Faith-Based Partners and Partner Gov't Agencies.
- Primary participant population are low income mothers coming from TANF, Incarceration, Child Support or Faith Based referrals
- Aims to address the problem of father absence in the City of Richmond where 65% of children (and 86% of African-American children) are born to women who are single at the time of delivery

## Working with Mothers

- Strategic partnership to facilitate the implementation of the city-wide Motherhood and Co-Parenting Initiative that supports single, divorced and widowed mothers.
- Partners include Richmond City Health District's Richmond Family and Fatherhood Initiative (RFFI) in collaboration with Trinity Family Life Center, Richmond City Justice Center, Rubicon Substance Abuse Treatment Center and the Carol Adams Foundation
- Working with Mothers: RFFI Program recruitment and engagement
- Referring Agencies: Department of Social Services, Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, Department of Child Support Enforcement, Richmond City Justice Center, Health Department's Resource Mothers Program, Faith Based Organizations and Churches
- Program Participants are an important source of referrals
- Television PSA's, Radio and Newspaper interviews
- Motherhood Alumni members

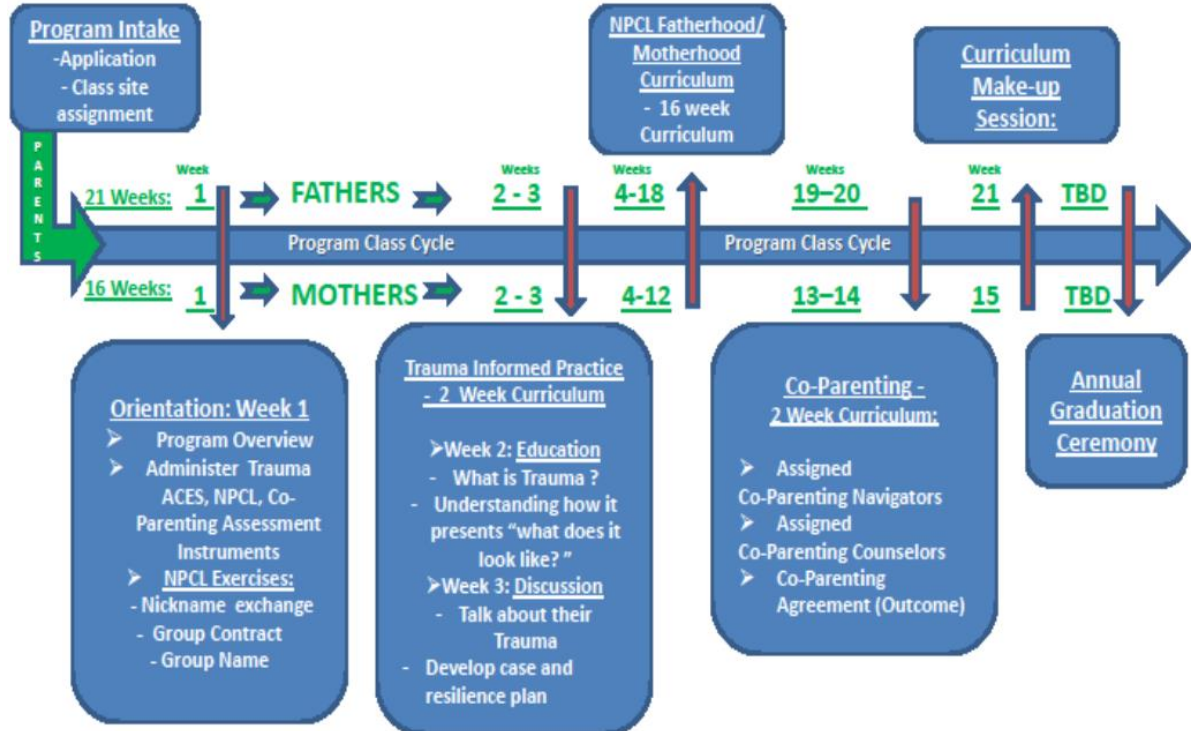
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## Co-parenting Intervention

Program Curricula:

- National Partnership for Community Leadership's [www.npclstrongfamilies.com](http://www.npclstrongfamilies.com) The Mothers and Parenting Curriculum addresses the real experiences and challenges of young mothers through 18 group sessions that provide support, information and motivation in areas of parenthood and relationships.
- Trauma Informed Care Curriculum (developed by Dr. Allison Sampson-Jackson)
- RFFI's Effective Co-Parenting Curriculum (developed by Dr. LeRoy Thompson)



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### **Motherhood Program June 2014- August 2015:**

- Program sites: Trinity Family Life Center, Richmond City Justice Center, Rubicon Substance Abuse Treatment Center, Carol Adams Foundation
- 83 mothers enrolled
- 23 mothers did not complete program
- 8 no shows
- 35 program graduates
- 10 graduates of DV and Motherhood & Co-Parenting

### **Fatherhood Program June 2014- August 2015:**

- Program sites: 7 Churches, Richmond City Justice Center, Rubicon Substance Abuse Treatment Center, District One Probation and Parole
- 391 fathers enrolled
- 136 fathers did not complete program
- 46 no shows
- 255 completed 16 week fatherhood curriculum

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### **Domestic Violence and Safety**

- Class sessions on the incidence of domestic violence
- Discussion of the impact of domestic violence on children
- Discussion of the Power and Control Wheel
- Opportunity to share personal experiences and evaluate their own relationships
- Information on domestic violence service providers and safety planning

### **Benefits and Challenges**

- To ensure that mothers receive the necessary knowledge and skills to be effectively understand trauma in their lives and develop resiliency plans.
- Mothers receive the necessary knowledge and skills to be effective parents.
- To ensure that both parents receive the same knowledge and skills in order to lovingly and effectively reach an agreement on co-parenting.
- To create a comfortable and supportive environment for mothers to discuss and learn the effects of father absence in their own lives and the lives of their children.
- To create a positive environment for mothers to de-stress and openly discuss their parenting strengths and challenges.



**Any  
Questions?**





## Contact Information for Our Presenters

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