

Executive Summary: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effectiveness of a Responsible Fatherhood Program: The Case of TYRO Dads

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Despite the growing number of responsible fatherhood programs, only a few of them have been evaluated based on a randomized controlled trial. To fill this gap in evaluation research on fatherhood programs, we conducted a single-blind, randomized, controlled trial to assess the effectiveness of an Ohio-based fatherhood program called "TYRO Dads" in improving the father-child relationship among low-income, primarily unmarried, nonresidential fathers.

We collected data from 252 fathers who participated in the study at 17 research sites in eight cities in Ohio by conducting a survey three times between February 2015 and September 2016: before the intervention (pre-test), immediately after the intervention (post-test), and three months after the intervention (follow-up). Study participants were randomly assigned to two groups: 137 in the intervention or treatment group

who took "TYRO Dads," a five-week fatherhood course (which consists of 10 sessions of 20 hours in total; i.e., two two-hour sessions per week) and 115 in the control group who only were offered the opportunity to attend an informational session about employment resources and other resources available to help them achieve their goals.

The primary outcomes of interest include fathers' reports of satisfaction with parenting their child and the frequency of father-child activities. Also measured were secondary outcomes of intervention: fathers' parenting efficacy, role identity, coparenting relationship with their child's mother, and perceived challenges in parenting.

First, linear latent trajectory analysis showed that the treatment group improved in fathers' parenting satisfaction, parenting efficacy, coparenting relationship, and, to a lesser extent, role identity over the 18-month period. Second, subsequent



TYRO Dads participants and staff.

analysis to test the secondary outcomes' mediation of the relationships between the treatment and the primary outcomes revealed that all three mediators partly explained the treatment effects—that is, the TYRO Dads program increased the fathers' parenting satisfaction by enhancing their coparenting relationship with their child's mother, parenting efficacy, and role identity. The program was also found to increase the frequency of father-child activities by improving the fathers' perceived role identity and, to a lesser extent, coparenting relationship with the child's mother. Finally, we found that the program's positive effect on fathers' satisfaction with parenting,

parenting efficacy, role identity, and coparenting relationship tended to be greater among fathers who participated more often—that is, the more sessions attended, the greater the treatment effect. Particularly, fathers who attended eight or more sessions (which is the minimum requirement for participating fathers to be certified as a TYRO Dad) were the primary beneficiaries of the TYRO Dads program. On the other hand, the treatment effect tended not to be affected by the levels of fathers' perceived challenges in parenting, while there was some indication that the effect might be greater among fathers who did not live with their child than those who did.

