



# Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare: Descriptive Evaluation Design Report

**October 2022**

Scott Baumgartner, Allon Kalisher, Nickie Fung, Jennifer Bellamy, Roseana Bess, and  
Matthew Stagner

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**Submitted to:**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
330 C Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20201  
Project Officers: Pooja Curtin and Katie Pahigiannis  
Contract Number:  
HHSP2332015000351/HHSP23337025T

**Submitted by:**

Mathematica  
1100 1st Street, NE, 12th Floor  
Washington, DC 20002-4221  
Project Director: Matthew Stagner  
Reference Number: 50521

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OPRE Report 2022-265

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We thank all of the team members and staff at each of the agencies participating in the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare project for sharing their time and expertise during the BSC and pilot study, and for their continued participation in the descriptive evaluation. The cover images are of murals celebrating fathers at child welfare offices in Hartford, Connecticut and Wake County, North Carolina.

A number of Mathematica staff provided their input on this report and the design of the descriptive evaluation. In addition to the authors, the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare team includes Jill Spielfogel, Candice Talkington, Amelia Forman, Eliza Abendroth, Diletta Mittone, Brandon Hollie, Sarah Campbell, Nathan Mix, and Luke Sharples. Laura Sarnoski, Grazia Maroso Mieren, and Yvonne Marki provided graphic design. Colleen Fitts, Jill Miller, and Cindy Castro provided production support. Effie Metropoulos and Bridget Gutierrez edited the report. We also thank Alexandra Stanczyk for reviewing earlier drafts of the report.

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### Overview

When child welfare agencies successfully engage fathers in their children’s cases, the agencies create a connection that can improve children’s outcomes (Casey Family Programs 2019). Despite research showing that engaging fathers and extended family can benefit children (e.g. Diniz et al. 2021, Erola et al. 2018, Corwin et al. 2020) and a deepening focus on parent engagement in child welfare, fathers have historically not been well engaged in child welfare services (Administration for Children and Families 2018).

The Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project, conducted by Mathematica and the University of Denver (DU), is testing the methodology of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) to (1) strengthen the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with their children in child welfare and (2) add to the evidence base on potentially promising engagement strategies for these fathers and paternal relatives. The BSC methodology pairs methods with values that distinguish it from other continuous learning processes, such as continuous cross-site shared learning opportunities, efforts to broaden participation by reducing power differentials among participants in the change process, and an emphasis on small tests of change.

### Purpose

This design report describes our approach to the FCL descriptive study. The study has three aims. The first is to describe potentially promising strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system. The second is to assess the promise of the BSC as a continuous quality improvement (CQI) framework for addressing challenges in the child welfare system—for example, whether and to what extent the BSC has potential for use in the child welfare field, and if so, how it may be applied to other child welfare challenges. The third is to assess the extent to which agencies experienced a shift in organizational culture after implementing the BSC. The FCL descriptive study is not intended to draw causal or other statistical inferences about the effectiveness of the BSC or any of the strategies that agencies developed and tested in the BSC. Instead, we will seek to describe promising practices and potential next steps for continued research.

### Highlights

- The FCL descriptive study is taking place between June 2021 and March 2023.
- The FCL descriptive study is informed by a pilot study (Fung et al. 2021), which documented how the BSC was implemented in FCL, how agencies participated in the BSC components, and the different types of strategies they developed and piloted during the BSC.
- Five child welfare agencies are participating in the FCL descriptive study, serving Los Angeles County, California; Hartford and Manchester, Connecticut; Denver, Colorado; Prowers County, Colorado; and Wake County, North Carolina.
- Data collection activities in the FCL descriptive study include: (1) a survey of child welfare staff and partners; (2) analysis of program data; (3) semi-structured interviews with child welfare staff, partners, and community members; and (4) focus groups with fathers and paternal relatives. Information related to the study’s data collection instruments can be found on the [study registration page on the Open Science Framework](#) and they are included as appendices to the report.

- A final report that describes findings from the descriptive study and includes options for integrating promising strategies into other child welfare settings will be developed and released in 2023. We are also exploring different approaches to producing short, engaging products to reach a wide range of audiences.

### Research questions

The descriptive study is designed to answer four research questions:

1. How did implementing the BSC contribute to the launch and potential sustainment of strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
2. Are father and paternal relative engagement strategies linked with increased levels of father and paternal relative and/or caseworker engagement?
3. To what extent did the BSC facilitate organization-level and/or system-level culture shifts for engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
4. Is the BSC a useful and promising tool for addressing the challenges facing child welfare agencies?

These questions build on each other—that is, answering Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 will inform conclusions related to Research Question 4. Because the BSC emphasized advancing racial justice as a component of father and paternal relative engagement, we will explore strategies and approaches aimed at reducing racial disparity and engaging men of color specifically as a component of these research questions and in all data collection. Where applicable in our analysis, we will note strategies and approaches that agencies developed to address disparities of specific racial and ethnic groups, including Black men and Latino men.

### I. Introduction

Recent research continues to link a father’s positive involvement in his family to outcomes that reflect improved child well-being (Diniz et al. 2021). When child welfare agencies successfully engage fathers in their children’s cases, the agencies create a connection that can improve children’s outcomes (Casey Family Programs 2019). Relatively few studies have addressed the specific benefits of involving paternal relatives in a child’s life, but support from extended family has also been linked to children’s well-being in a general population (for example, Erola et al. 2018) and to characteristics that insulate youth from adverse outcomes in child welfare (for example, Corwin et al. 2020). Despite this research and a deepening focus on parent engagement in child welfare, fathers have historically not been well engaged in child welfare services (Administration for Children and Families 2018).

The Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project, conducted by Mathematica and the University of Denver (DU) in Colorado, is testing the methodology of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) to (1) strengthen the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with their children in child welfare and (2) add to the evidence base on potentially promising engagement strategies for these fathers and paternal relatives. The BSC methodology pairs methods with values that distinguish it from other continuous learning processes, such as continuous cross-site shared learning opportunities, efforts to broaden participation by reducing power differentials among people involved in the change process, and an emphasis on small tests of change. FCL is sponsored by the Office of Family Assistance within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is administered by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, in partnership with the Children’s Bureau, both within ACF.

The FCL descriptive evaluation has three aims. The first is to describe potentially promising strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system. The second is to assess the promise of the BSC as a continuous quality improvement (CQI) framework for addressing challenges in the child welfare system—for example, whether and to what extent the BSC has potential for use in the child welfare field, and if so, how it may be applied to other child welfare challenges. The third is to assess the extent to which agencies experienced a shift in organizational culture after implementing the BSC.

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#### **Aims of the FCL descriptive study**

1. Describe potentially promising strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives in the child welfare system
  2. Assess the promise of the BSC as a continuous quality improvement framework for addressing challenges in the child welfare system
  3. Assess the extent to which participating agencies experienced a shift in organizational culture
- 

This design report describes our approach to addressing the aims of this study. The evaluation plan consists of four sections. First, we summarize the BSC methodology used for FCL. Then, we describe the agencies that participated in the FCL BSC and are participating in the descriptive evaluation, including describing the strategies and approaches they have implemented. Next, we give an overview of the evaluation, including its purpose, the research questions driving it, a timeline of activities, and how we plan to collect data. The final section covers how we will report our findings. Where appropriate, we describe how the findings from a pilot study of the implementation of the FCL BSC (Fung et al. 2021) informed our plans for conducting the evaluation.

## II. The BSC Methodology

In August 2019, five teams representing six child welfare agencies began participating in a BSC aimed to improve placement stability and permanency outcomes for children by engaging their fathers and paternal relatives. The BSC is a collaborative learning approach used to test and spread promising practices to help organizations improve in a focused topic area. The BSC includes staff with diverse roles in a team-based learning approach; multiple in-person learning sessions and some site-specific consultation; emphasis on the rapid use of data, feedback, and quality improvement; and a focus on organizational change and sustainable practices (Lang et al. 2015; Institute for Healthcare Improvement 2003). The BSC methodology has five key elements:

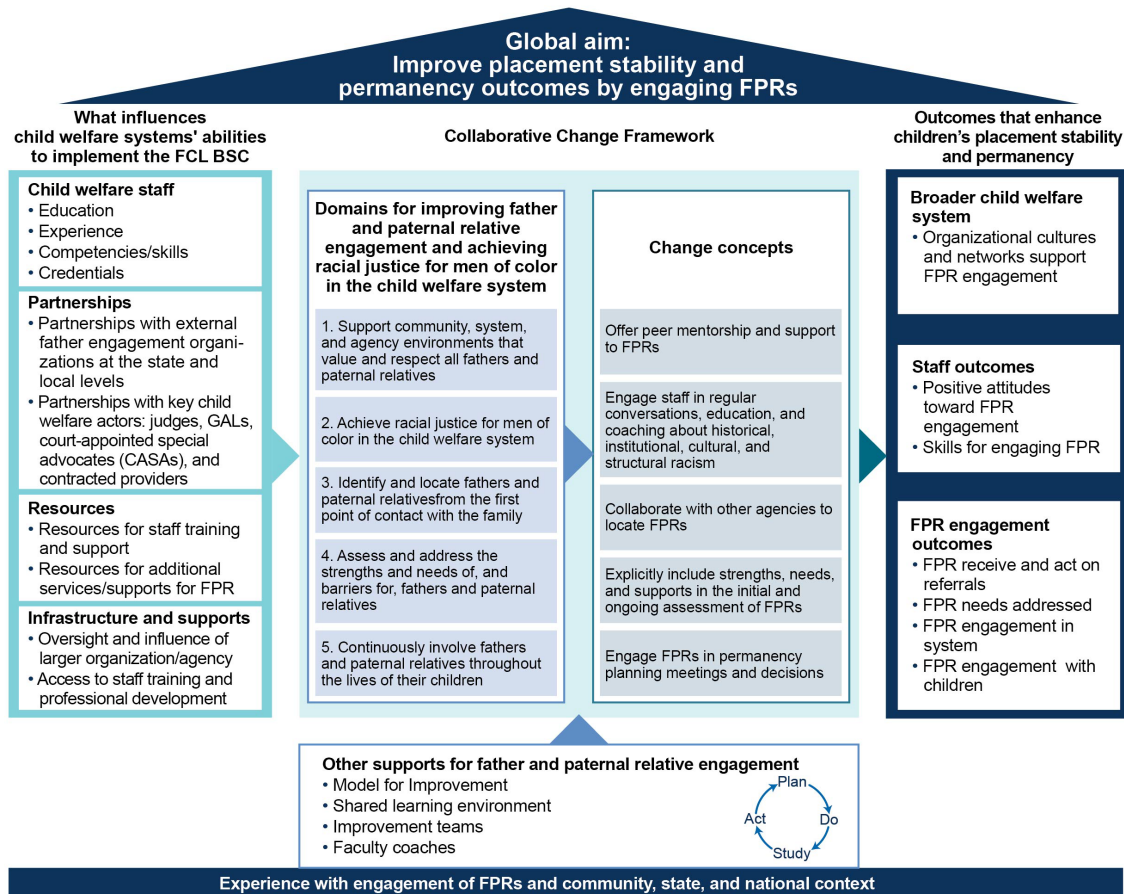
1. **The Collaborative Change Framework** is a mission statement that breaks down the specified outcomes of organizational change into attainable segments. It creates a common language for BSC participants.
2. **Multilevel inclusive teams** for each participating agency include representatives from different levels of an agency, community partners, and fathers and paternal relatives. Individual teams can vary in their composition. They lead the development and implementation of strategies aligned with the Collaborative Change Framework.
3. **Faculty coaches** share expertise with teams and facilitate shared learning across teams.
4. **The shared learning environment** is a collection of continuous learning activities to help teams collaborate, learn from each other, and build capacity.
5. **The Model for Improvement** sets the foundation for the BSC. It translates the themes outlined in the Collaborative Change Framework into testable strategies and rapid feedback systems that drive the implementation and improvement of strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Central to the model for improvement are Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles, which are short, rapid tests of changes meant to solve problems in a program.

The five elements of the BSC methodology support the implementation of promising practices in the real-world contexts in which people work (Daily et al. 2018). The BSC methodology has been used in the child welfare setting to strengthen practices related to improving health care for children in foster care, recruiting and retaining foster parents and other resource families, and reducing disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children and families of color (Casey Family Programs 2011). More information about how each agency implemented the elements of the BSC methodology is available in the FCL BSC pilot study report (Fung et al. 2021).

The descriptive evaluation is grounded in the FCL BSC logic model (Figure 1) developed by the Mathematica-DU team after the creation of the Collaborative Change Framework, while designing the BSC pilot study. The logic model illustrates the components of the FCL BSC, including the Collaborative Change Framework in the center and, in the rectangle below the framework, the Model for Improvement and other BSC elements. The logic model presented in Figure 2 reflects changes made to the framework after the conclusion of the FCL BSC. The box on the far left lists four factors that influence the child welfare system's ability to implement the BSC: (1) child welfare staff, (2) partnerships, (3) resources, and (4) infrastructure and supports. Successful implementation of the BSC is hypothesized to lead to three types of outcomes that enhance children's placement stability and permanency: (1) a change in culture regarding the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives in the broader child welfare system, (2) staff attitudes and skills for engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and (3) father and paternal relative (FPR)

engagement outcomes. Altogether, improved engagement of fathers and paternal relatives will hypothetically lead to the ultimate aim of improving placement stability and permanency outcomes.

**Figure 1. FCL BSC logic model for father and paternal relative (FPR) engagement in the child welfare system**



Note: The FCL BSC logic model was updated in April 2022 to align with the updated Collaborative Change Framework, which appears in the middle two columns.

This logic model also informed the BSC pilot study (Fung et al. 2021). The 11 research questions that guided the pilot study were designed to describe how child welfare agencies engaged in the FCL BSC, what factors influenced their ability to do so, what strategies for change they developed, and which strategies might be sustainable. As initially conceived, this descriptive evaluation would focus on both proximal outcomes (on the far right of the logic model) and the overall, long-term placement stability and permanency outcomes. Though the agencies engaged fully in the FCL BSC and completed more than 50 small tests of strategies by June 2020, the pilot study found that (1) they did not have enough data to determine whether those strategies were promising enough to scale and (2) they were not ready for a rigorous outcome evaluation using an experimental or quasi-experimental design.

Mathematica-DU support for the FCL BSC ended in March 2021. Table 1 illustrates the changes that have occurred to the five key elements of the FCL BSC since then. To understand the promise of the BSC as a CQI framework for addressing challenges in child welfare and for changing agencies' organizational culture, the evaluation will examine agencies' ongoing CQI practices in the absence of support for the

BSC, such as continued regular tracking and review of father and paternal relative engagement metrics, conducting small tests of change, or ongoing multi-level team meetings.

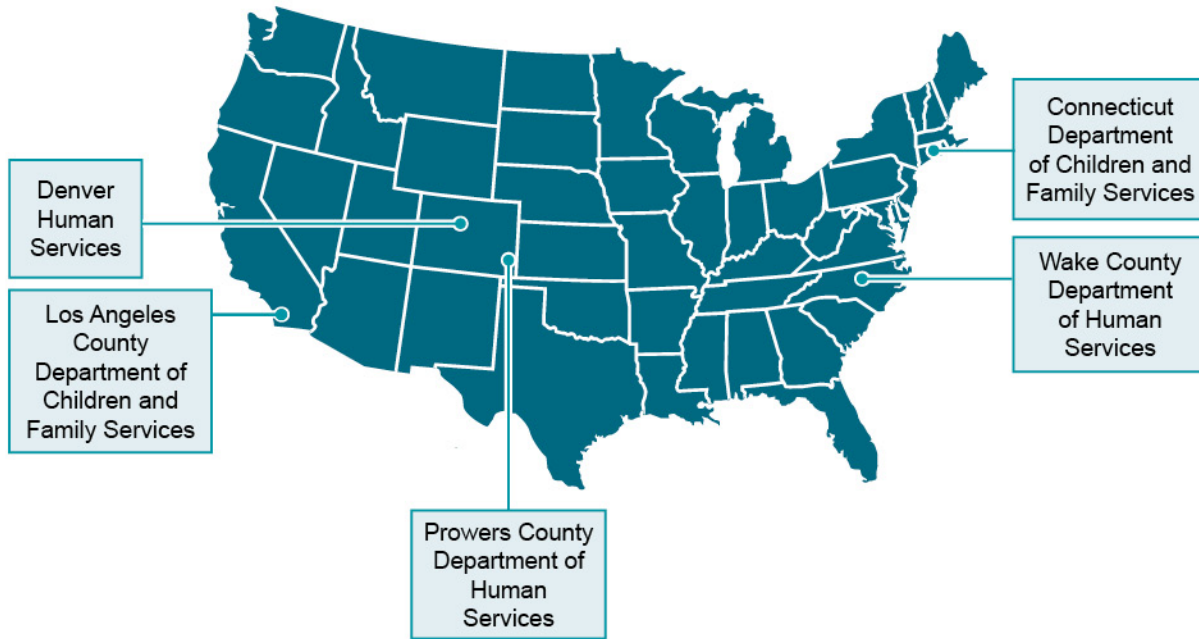
**Table 1. Changes to the FCL BSC for the evaluation**

Element	What the element looked like in the FCL BSC	Changes since BSC support ended
Collaborative Change Framework	For the FCL BSC, the Collaborative Change Framework is grounded in five domains for addressing father and paternal relative engagement. The domains are interrelated and aimed at creating a system that fully engages fathers and paternal relatives in every aspect of child welfare service delivery. These domains were informed by expert consultations and a literature review of father and paternal relative engagement strategies.	To support broader dissemination, BSC improvement team and study team members revised the framework in April 2021. Among the changes: framing the Collaborative Change Framework as a “call to action” on progress to achieve racial justice in child welfare. A forthcoming brief will describe the revised framework in greater detail.
Improvement teams	Each team was made up of six to eight people from each agency. As documented in the FCL BSC pilot study report, team members represented different roles across the agency, including caseworkers, administrators, managers, data management staff, and fathers and paternal relatives themselves (Fung et al. 2021). However, no two teams had the same composition; it was up to the teams to determine their makeup.	After support for the FCL BSC ended, agencies modified the structure, membership, and/or frequency of meetings; however, they all continued their improvement teams.
Faculty coaches	ACF and the Mathematica-DU team brought on six faculty coaches with diverse perspectives, identities, and expertise across the domains of the Collaborative Change Framework to advise teams as they developed and tested strategies and to facilitate shared learning across teams.	The availability of faculty coaches ended in March 2021 with the end of the FCL BSC.
Shared learning environment	For the FCL BSC, teams had access to a wide range of resources, including in-person learning sessions, virtual booster sessions, all-team meetings, monthly affinity group calls, and a SharePoint site where teams could post and review materials.	Regular shared learning environment activities, such as affinity group calls and all-team calls ended in March 2021. An evaluation kickoff occurred in June 2021. The SharePoint site remained available as a resource, but the Mathematica-DU team did not update it.
Model for Improvement	In the FCL BSC, teams used the Model for Improvement to design and test strategies aligned with the Collaborative Change Framework.	The Mathematica-DU team will have regular conversations with agencies about whether and how they continue to test and capture data about the strategies they are implementing. These conversations will happen in the context of collecting data for the descriptive evaluation and evaluation technical assistance. Agencies are not required to conduct or report on PDSA cycles.

### III. Agencies Participating in the Descriptive Evaluation

Five agencies are participating in the FCL descriptive evaluation, representing a range of welfare agencies in terms of both size as well as urban and rural settings, with a variety of agency structures. These agencies are distributed across the country (Figure 2). A summary of the agencies' characteristics appears in Table 2.

Figure 2. Agencies participating in the FCL descriptive evaluation



#### A. Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services

The Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is a state-administered child welfare agency with six regions. Its Hartford office participated in the FCL BSC. Both the Hartford and Manchester offices, which together make up Region IV of the Connecticut DCFS, are participating in the descriptive evaluation. After the end of the BSC, Connecticut planned to spread promising strategies that the Hartford office had developed to its Manchester office. By including both offices in the descriptive evaluation, we can examine this expansion.

As of late 2019, the state served over 24,000 children in in-home and out-of-home care settings; Region IV was the largest of the six state regions. For the descriptive evaluation, Region IV has a strategic plan that includes strategies to improve father and paternal relative engagement, including protocols and enhanced search procedures to locate and identify fathers early in the course of a case and make sure they are included in initial considered removal and ongoing case review meetings. All Connecticut DCFS regions are required to have a Father Engagement Leadership Team (FELT) to identify and champion strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives.

Region IV regularly runs reports from its data system about fathers' participation in considered removal and ongoing case review meetings. Ongoing case review reports include measures related to the quality and consistency of the father's relationship with his child and whether the father's needs are being addressed. As a part of Region IV's CQI process, quality improvement staff track whether fathers are notified of decisions to place a child in out-of-home care.

### B. Denver Human Services

Denver Human Services provides child welfare services in Denver, Colorado, through its Division of Child Welfare. It is a state-supervised, county-administered system. As of late 2019, Denver Human Services served about 1,000 children in in-home and out-of-home care settings. For the descriptive evaluation, Denver Human Services is implementing a range of strategies and approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives throughout the course of a child welfare case. For example, Denver Human Services has established (1) enhanced search procedures to identify fathers during intake and investigation and (2) protocols for inviting fathers to family team meetings, involving them in case planning activities, and ensuring visitation opportunities. Denver Human Services is participating in a statewide Responsible Fatherhood initiative and has a robust Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion initiative.

As a part of the FCL BSC, Denver Human Services developed several reports related to father and paternal relative engagement, including whether a father was identified when a child was referred to the agency, father identification and contact during the assessment phase, and whether fathers were invited to or attended family team meetings.

### C. Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services

The Los Angeles County DCFS is responsible for ensuring the safety of children in Los Angeles County, California. It is a state-supervised, county-administered system. As of late 2019, Los Angeles DCFS served more than 34,000 children in in-home and out-of-home care settings. Two Los Angeles County DCFS offices, Palmdale and Vermont Corridor, participated in the FCL BSC and are participating in the descriptive evaluation. Both offices are implementing protocols and procedures to identify fathers earlier in the course of a child welfare case and strategies to enhance engagement in ongoing casework, such as assigning fatherhood champions to cases when caseworkers have difficulty engaging the fathers. They also are participating in the Thriving Families, Safer Children initiative to provide family supports that may prevent a child's removal from the home;<sup>1</sup> providing financial support to a community-based initiative called Father Strong that provides parenting skill development workshops; and maintaining roundtable groups that meet regularly to promote Eradicating Racial Disparity and Disproportionality (ERDD) strategies, including those designed to increase the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives.

Los Angeles DCFS generates several data reports related to father and paternal relative engagement, including a Safe Measures dashboard to track whether fathers are included in case planning and reports from the agency's client management system. Los Angeles DCFS also collects data on attendance and participation in Father Strong, and is tracking which fathers who have completed the Father Strong program have reunified with their children.

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<sup>1</sup> Thriving Families, Safer Children is a nationwide effort to redesign child welfare systems to take a more proactive approach to preventing families from becoming involved in the child welfare system. It is sponsored by the Children's Bureau, Casey Family Programs, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Prevent Child Abuse America.



### D. Prowers County Department of Human Services

The Prowers County Department of Human Services provides child welfare services in Prowers County, a small, rural county in southeast Colorado. The agency operates in a state-supervised, county-administered system. As of late 2019, Prowers County served about 60 children in in-home and out-of-home care settings. Prowers County has taken a holistic, wraparound approach to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Its caseworkers regularly coordinate on cases with staff from other programs such as Child Support; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; and the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program. Like Denver Human Services, Prowers County is participating in a statewide Responsible Fatherhood initiative.

To assess progress with engaging fathers, Prowers County generates reports from its data system about father identification, in-home contacts with fathers, and referrals to family services.

### E. Wake County Department of Human Services

The Wake County Department of Human Services is a state-supervised, county-administered system that provides child welfare services in Wake County, North Carolina. As of early 2020, Wake County served about 1,400 children in in-home and out-of-home care settings. Wake County has a Father Engagement Unit to provide prevention and advocacy services directly to fathers. In addition, father engagement coaches are available for family team meetings. The agency has also provided guidance to caseworkers and other staff on strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives. It has established protocols to ensure that staff are diligent about locating and engaging fathers and procedures for supervisors to follow up with their staff about father engagement efforts.

For the FCL BSC, Wake County began collecting data on whether fathers were invited to and participated in family team meetings, then presented the data using a data visualization tool for CQI purposes. Wake County also collects data on attempts to identify fathers, their participation in father engagement coaching, and father and paternal relative visitation.

**Table 2. Characteristics of agencies participating in the FCL descriptive evaluation**

Agencies	Location	Setting	Approximate number of children in in-home and out-of-home care settings <sup>a</sup>
Connecticut DCFS (Region IV, including the Hartford and Manchester offices)	Hartford and Manchester, Connecticut	Urban, suburban	24,000
Denver Human Services	Denver, Colorado	Urban	1,000
Los Angeles County DCFS (Palmdale and Vermont Corridor offices)	Los Angeles, California	Urban	34,000
Prowers County Department of Human Services	Lamar, Colorado	Rural	60
Wake County Department of Human Services	Raleigh, North Carolina	Urban, suburban	1,400 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Information reported by agencies as of late 2019, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>b</sup> As of early 2020.

## IV. Evaluation Research Questions and Data Collection

The descriptive evaluation is designed to assess the promise of the strategies and approaches developed in the FCL BSC to improve placement stability and permanency outcomes. The FCL pilot study documented how the BSC was implemented in FCL, how agencies participated in the BSC components, and the different types of strategies they developed and piloted using the Model for Improvement. The descriptive evaluation will document how and to what extent agencies sustained and spread strategies and approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives after the conclusion of the FCL BSC and will assess the progress that agencies made in achieving the outcomes in the FCL logic model: (1) a positive change in the organizational culture and support for engaging fathers and paternal relatives, (2) improvements in staff attitudes and skills for engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and (3) better father and paternal relative engagement outcomes.

Assessing the promise of the strategies and approaches will address three complementary aims of the descriptive evaluation. First, the evaluation will describe the father and paternal relative engagement strategies and approaches that agencies implemented and, to the extent possible, track patterns between what agencies did and the observed changes in engagement. Second, the evaluation will shed light on whether the BSC could be used to address other challenges in child welfare. Assessing process outcomes for the strategies and approaches (Aim 1) will indicate the promise of the BSC (Aim 2) because the BSC was central to the development of those strategies and approaches—both in terms of developing, launching, and refining them and in terms of supporting an innovative organizational culture willing to rapidly develop and test new approaches to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Assessing shifts in an organization’s culture (Aim 3) offers a system-level look at two aspects of success of the BSC: (1) whether strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives may be sustainable and (2) whether there may be longer-term changes in how agencies approach CQI.

### A. Research questions

The four broad research questions, which address the three complementary aims of the descriptive evaluation, build on one another—that is, answering Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 will inform conclusions related to Research Question 4:

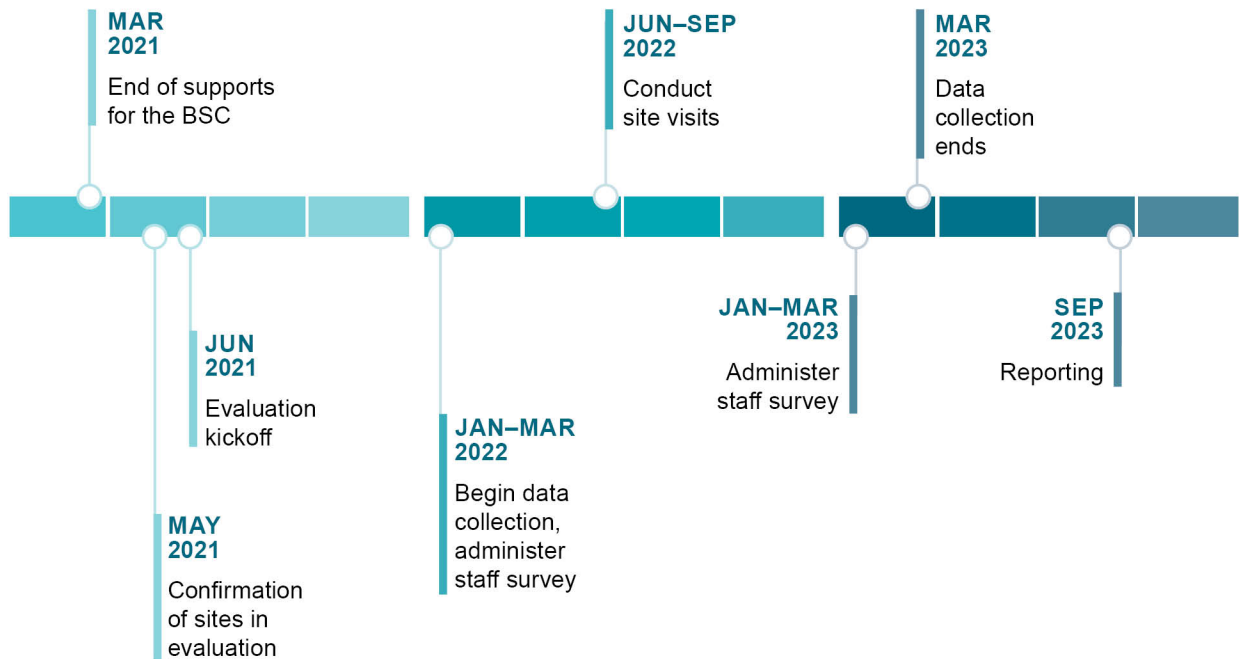
1. How did implementing the BSC contribute to the launch and potential sustainment of strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
2. Are father and paternal relative engagement strategies linked with increased levels of father and paternal relative and/or caseworker engagement?
3. To what extent did the BSC facilitate organization-level and/or system-level culture shifts for engaging fathers and paternal relatives?
4. Is the BSC a useful and promising tool for addressing the challenges facing child welfare agencies?

Because the Collaborative Change Framework emphasized advancing racial justice as a component of father and paternal relative engagement, we will explore strategies and approaches aimed at reducing racial disparity and engaging men of color specifically as a component of these research questions and in all data collection. Where applicable in our analysis, we will note strategies and approaches that agencies developed to address disparities of specific racial and ethnic groups, including Black men and Latino men.

## B. Timeline

Figure 3 presents the timeline for the evaluation, with key milestones. For the sake of simplicity, some evaluation activities are not shown, such as the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) clearance process, institutional review board (IRB) approval for a study involving human subjects, and the establishment of memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with agencies. The following sections describe the activities in this timeline.

**Figure 3. Key evaluation milestones**



## C. Evaluation kickoff

After confirming that all the agencies that participated in the FCL BSC would continue in the descriptive evaluation, we held an evaluation kickoff event in June 2021, three months after the conclusion of the FCL BSC. The evaluation kickoff served four aims:

1. Boost enthusiasm and momentum for the continued work and the descriptive evaluation
2. Provide agencies a chance to share an update about their progress since the end of the monthly calls, including the strategies they were currently using and had spread more broadly in their agency
3. Refresh and update agencies' knowledge of the BSC elements and which of those elements the sites should continue during the evaluation
4. Identify roadblocks to evaluation readiness, including challenges with data capacity, and develop approaches to addressing them

During the event, teams from each agency reflected on the FCL BSC and documented the changes they made by completing two activities that asked them to view their accomplishments from the perspectives

of fathers and paternal relatives who were involved in the child welfare system. In an empathy mapping activity, the teams brainstormed what fathers and paternal relatives might say, think, do, and feel about the agency at two points in time: before the agency began the BSC work and after. Teams discussed how the perspectives of fathers and paternal relatives might have changed, then identified possible reasons for these changes related to staff competency, organizational changes, and leadership. Next, the teams participated in a journey mapping activity to document the different strategies and approaches the agencies were using to engage fathers and paternal relatives throughout the course of a child welfare case—from intake and investigation to case planning and ongoing casework for children in in-home and out-of-home placements. Between the evaluation kickoff and the start of data collection in January 2022, we met with agency staff to understand (1) how they were planning to continue their strategies and approaches to father and paternal relative engagement and (2) the program data they had available to provide suggestive evidence about the promise of those practices.

### D. Data collection

We will use a comprehensive set of data sources to answer the project’s guiding research and secondary questions (Table 3). We will collect data through three primary activities: (1) one site visit per agency, which will include interviews with key staff, focus groups with child welfare and partner staff, and a focus group with fathers and paternal relatives who have recently closed cases; (2) a survey of child welfare and partner staff; and (3) collection of program data.

**Table 3. Research questions and data sources**

Research question	Data sources				
	Interviews with key staff	CW and partner FG	FPR FG	CW and partner staff survey	Document/ program data
<b>Research Question 1: How did implementing the BSC contribute to the launch and potential sustainment of strategies and approaches for engaging fathers and paternal relatives?</b>					
How did the team choose which strategies and approaches to sustain? To what extent were the teams able to use data to inform their choices?	✓	✓			
How were the strategies and approaches implemented?		✓			✓
How did the agency monitor implementation of the strategies and approaches for father and paternal relative engagement?	✓	✓		✓	✓
How did the agency measure success of the strategies and approaches?	✓	✓			✓
What system partners were involved in implementing sustained strategies and approaches?	✓	✓			
What were the barriers to and facilitators of implementing selected strategies and approaches?		✓			
<b>Research Question 2. Are father and paternal relative engagement strategies linked with increased levels of father and paternal relative and/or caseworker engagement?</b>					
How did the agency measure changes in client outcomes?	✓	✓			✓
Were fathers and paternal relatives satisfied with their child welfare interactions?			✓		
Have the agency and fathers and paternal relatives observed changes in father and paternal relative or caseworker engagement?	✓	✓	✓		✓

Research question	Data sources				
	Interviews with key staff	CW and partner FG	FPR FG	CW and partner staff survey	Document/program data
What are the barriers to assessing client outcomes?	✓	✓			✓
<b>Research Question 3: To what extent did the BSC facilitate organization-level and/or system-level culture shifts for engaging fathers and paternal relatives?</b>					
How have staff practices shifted toward more active efforts to include fathers and paternal relatives?	✓	✓		✓	✓
How has organizational competency (including staffing and training) for engaging fathers and paternal relatives changed over time?	✓	✓		✓	✓
How has staff satisfaction with engaging fathers and paternal relatives changed over time?	✓	✓		✓	
How has the quality of services for engaging fathers and paternal relatives changed over time?	✓	✓	✓	✓	
How has the agency supported, recognized, and reinforced father engagement, either as part of or beyond participation in the BSC?	✓	✓		✓	✓
<b>Research Question 4: Is the BSC a useful and promising tool for addressing the challenges facing child welfare agencies? If so, what elements must be implemented for it to be successful?</b>					
Which BSC elements did the agency continue to use after Mathematica-DU stopped supporting the BSC? Why did the agencies continue or discontinue BSC elements?	✓	✓			✓
Does the agency use or plan to use BSC methods to address challenges in child welfare in areas other than father and paternal relative engagement? Why or why not?	✓	✓			✓
What was the organizational culture regarding continuous quality improvement before participating in the BSC? How has it changed, if at all?	✓	✓		✓	
What process will the agency continue to use to make decisions about program improvement? Who will be involved in these discussions?	✓	✓		✓	✓
Is the agency continuing to work with community partners to engage fathers and paternal relatives?	✓	✓			✓
What are the community and public policy barriers to and facilitators of engaging fathers and paternal relatives (for example, availability of community partners, rules and regulations)?	✓	✓			

CW = child welfare; FG = focus group.

## E. Site visits

For each of the five agencies participating in the evaluation, we will conduct a multiday site visit.<sup>2</sup> The site visits will occur in June through September 2022. All site visits will include semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

<sup>2</sup> Because both the Connecticut DCFS and the Los Angeles County DCFS include two separate offices in the descriptive evaluation, we anticipate that their site visits will be longer than those for the other participating agencies.

### 1. Semi-structured interviews

During the site visit, we will interview key agency staff who are involved in planning, implementing, and spreading the strategies and approaches: high-level child welfare administrators; program managers; and leaders and staff from community partners, including those who helped implement the strategies and approaches and those who did not but may interact with fathers and paternal relatives with open child welfare cases. In these interviews, participants will discuss the decision making processes they used to select, sustain, and assess the success of strategies and the child welfare agencies' changes in staff practices and organizational culture related to engaging fathers and paternal relatives and to CQI.

The semi-structured interviews will draw on the Implementation Drivers framework from the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) to assess strategy implementation (Fixsen et al. 2005). These frameworks have been used to assess a wide range of human services organizations, including child welfare agencies (Armstrong et al. 2014). The NIRN frameworks provide a common language that agencies can use to assess implementation even if they are implementing different strategies in different contexts. In particular, the research questions and the secondary questions in Table 3 are informed by implementation drivers, or components of successful implementation:

- **Organization drivers** describe an agency's decision-making processes, including its use of data and evidence, involvement of partners, and facilitative administration, the extent to which managers and administrators actively encourage a culture of learning and new ways of working. Understanding organization drivers within agencies, such as how agencies developed new tools to help them track data on engaging fathers and paternal relatives, will shed light on how they chose, monitored, and sustained strategies and how partners were involved. Organization drivers inform Research Questions 1, 2, and 4.
- **Competency drivers** describe how staff are selected, trained, and supervised to maintain fidelity to the implementation plans for strategies. Understanding competency drivers within agencies, such as how strategies and approaches are communicated to staff and how staff are prepared to use them, will shed light on implementation fidelity and quality, including staff knowledge of and buy-in to the strategies. Competency drivers primarily inform Research Question 3.
- **Leadership drivers** describe how an organization's leaders identify and respond to barriers and challenges related to implementation. Understanding leadership drivers, such as improvement teams' access to and support from senior leaders during the BSC pilot study, will shed light on the role of the implementation teams and other agency leaders participating in the evaluation. Leadership drivers inform Research Questions 1, 3, and 4.

The semi-structured interviews will also provide insight into changes in the organizational culture as a result of FCL BSC participation. The NIRN Implementation Drivers framework addresses some components of organizational culture through a focus on constructs related to (1) staff buy-in to and enthusiasm for engagement strategies; (2) the role of agency leaders in promoting father and paternal relative engagement as a priority; (3) the use of decision making processes that include input from a range of partners such as staff at different levels, partner agencies, and fathers and paternal relatives; and (4) the use of data and evidence (for example, from agency data systems and feedback collected in short PDSA cycles). The interviews will also collect data about two domains, proposed by Armstrong and colleagues (2014), related to the organizational climate of child welfare agencies. The first is the agency's mission, vision, and values, which promote a shared understanding of the importance of organizational changes (addressed as a part of Research Question 3). The second is engagement with important partners, such as

community-based organizations and youth and families, which is important to organizational change (addressed as a part of Research Questions 1 and 4).

### 2. Focus groups

The evaluation will collect feedback from fathers and paternal relatives about their experiences with the child welfare system. On each site visit, we will aim to conduct one to two focus groups with fathers and paternal relatives whose cases have recently closed with the focal child welfare agency, to learn whether they experienced changes in how they were approached and treated since the strategies were implemented.

### 3. Analysis

We will use thematic analysis to analyze and summarize information from the site visits. For each qualitative data collection activity, we will use standardized templates to organize and document the information and then apply codes. We will search the coded text to gauge consistency and triangulate across participants and data sources. This process will reduce large volumes of qualitative data to a manageable number of topics, themes, or categories (Coffey and Atkinson 1996; Yin 1994), which can then be analyzed to address the research questions.

To code the qualitative data for key themes and subtopics, we will first develop a coding scheme that is in accordance with the construct of interest and builds from the interview and focus group questions. Questions and codes will align with the constructs in the NIRN Implementation Drivers framework. In the first stage of coding, we will code interview and focus group responses to applicable constructs. In the second stage, we will review all data coded within a specific construct to identify broad themes by triangulating across respondents and data sources. In a third stage, we will create narrower codes within the broad themes. In addition, coders will use a coding scheme to document key information, such as descriptions of the strategies being implemented and the names of partners involved in implementing each strategy.

Team members will code the data using qualitative analysis software. To ensure reliability across coders, all team members will code an initial document, then compare their codes to identify and resolve discrepancies. As coding proceeds, the evaluation task lead will continue to review samples of coded data to check reliability.

## F. Surveys

We will administer a short survey to implementing staff at child welfare agencies and partner staff. The respondents will include some of the same staff members who participate in the focus groups. The survey will ask staff to assess the child welfare agency's organizational culture and their own practices related to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Specifically, it will ask child welfare agency and partner staff to rate aspects of the agency's values for serving fathers and paternal relatives; supervisory and organizational support for engaging fathers and paternal relatives and monitoring father and paternal relative engagement; and the openness, adaptability, and experience of agency staff in engaging fathers and paternal relatives. The survey will draw on three measures:

1. **Implementation Climate Scale (Ehrhart et al. 2014)**, an 18-item scale validated in public health settings that assesses the extent to which the agency (1) focuses on using evidence-based practices (EBPs), (2) provides support and education about EBPs, (3) recognizes staff for using EBPs, (4) hires staff who have previous experience or training in EBPs, and (5) hires staff who are open to using EBPs.
2. **Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale (Aarons 2004)**, a 15-item scale validated in clinical settings that assesses staff members' (1) attitudes about EBPs, (2) likelihood of adopting EBPs when required, (3) openness to new practices, and (4) resistance to new interventions when they diverge from regular practices.
3. **Implementation assessment**, a 19-question assessment tool developed for the BSC pilot study to understand (1) the level of staff engagement in BSC activities, (2) the spread of BSC practices to others in the participating programs, and (3) staff members' confidence with engaging fathers and paternal relatives.

Although the father and paternal relative engagement strategies and approaches the agencies are implementing may not be evidence-based, the items in the Implementation Climate Scale and Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale ask about dimensions relevant to the descriptive study. For example, the Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale asks about a respondent's willingness to try new things, even if it differs from what they are used to doing. The Implementation Climate Scale includes several items about agency support, such as whether the agency offers professional development opportunities and whether program supervisors have expectations for staff related to the implementation of a particular strategy or initiative.

We will administer the survey in the first quarter of 2022 and about 12 months later to see if there are any observable changes over time. Before each administration, we will review agency organizational charts with the main points of contact at each agency to identify relevant staff roles. Staff and partners whose roles are dedicated to father and paternal relative engagement strategies and approaches, such as a fatherhood coordinator, will be included in the survey. Other staff who may be tasked with implementing father and paternal relative engagement strategies and approaches, such as hotline staff and caseworkers, will be randomly sampled.<sup>3</sup> Table 4 shows how the total number of relevant staff and sample size will be distributed across each agency for the first administration of the survey.

At each point in time, we will draw a new sample of frontline staff, their direct supervisors, and key partner staff who are involved in implementing father and paternal relative strategies and approaches. The number of staff selected to receive the survey in the second administration will be informed by the response rate to the first administration. In other words, if the response rate is low in the first administration, we will select a larger group of staff to receive the survey in the second administration in order to maximize the number of responses. As a result, the survey is intended to provide two point-in-time pictures of agency culture instead of a longitudinal comparison.

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<sup>3</sup> A census of Prowers County Department of Human Services will be taken because the agency is small relative to the others in the descriptive evaluation.



**Table 4. FCL descriptive evaluation staff survey sample**

Agency	Total relevant staff	Number of staff selected to receive survey (Q1 2022)	Percentage of total relevant staff who receive Q1 2022 survey (%)
Connecticut DCFS	265	96	36
Denver Human Services	262	96	37
Los Angeles County DCFS	522	190	36
Prowers County Department of Human Services	18	18	100
Wake County Human Services	218	80	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,285</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>37</b>

**1. Analysis**

For the surveys, we will report response rates, descriptive statistics, and aggregate responses at the agency level. We will compare descriptive statistics from Rounds 1 and 2 of the survey using standard statistical techniques, such as a t-test to compare differences in means at the beginning and the end of the evaluation. We will also explore responses by staff position; however, our ability to report on or draw inferences from position-level responses will depend upon the response rate.

**G. Program data**

The program data we collect will largely be driven by the data and reports related to father and paternal engagement that agencies have available and use for their own CQI processes. During the FCL BSC, sites used custom data collection and tracking processes and relied on administrative data from a variety of sources, including case reviews, management reports, and other data from the agency’s case management system. Data collection and tracking for the FCL BSC represented a significant challenge for the participating agencies, due to outdated and cumbersome data collection systems that made data difficult to extract and use for analysis (Fung et al. 2021). One of the five agencies continued collecting all the FCL metrics once the FCL BSC ended, while the others continued to collect some metrics. We will collect data starting in April 2022 and continue through March 2023. Where possible, we will request retrospective data from April 2021—the first month after the FCL BSC ended—forward. Table 5 describes the availability of data on key constructs of father and paternal relative engagement for the descriptive evaluation.

**Table 5. Availability of program data for the FCL descriptive evaluation**

Construct	Connecticut	Denver	Los Angeles	Prowers	Wake
<b>Intake</b>					
Identification of father in initial call or referral		✓		✓	✓
Identification of paternal relatives in initial call or referral				✓	
<b>Investigation</b>					
Efforts to locate fathers and/or paternal relatives					✓
Initial contact with fathers and/or paternal relatives		✓	✓		
Timeliness of initial contact with fathers and/or paternal relatives		✓			
<b>Family team meetings</b>					
Invitation of father		✓			✓
Attendance of father	✓	✓	✓		✓
Determinations made from family team/considered removal meeting	✓				
<b>Ongoing casework</b>					
Father or paternal relative involvement in case planning	✓		✓		
Contact with father or paternal relative		✓	✓	✓	
Father or paternal relative involvement in home visits				✓	
<b>Services and activities</b>					
Assessment of father and/or paternal relative's needs	✓				
Referrals for father and/or paternal relatives to services	✓	✓		✓	✓
Follow-up on referrals for services				✓	
Participation in fatherhood classes or groups				✓	
Completion of fatherhood classes or groups			✓		✓
Staff and/or partner completion of fatherhood-focused training		✓	✓		
<b>Permanency</b>					
Notification of father and/or paternal relative when placement of a child is made	✓				
Placement with father		✓			✓
Placement with paternal relative					✓
Father and/or paternal relative visits with children in out-of-home care	✓	✓			✓

### 1. Analysis

For the program data that agencies provide, we will report descriptive statistics and trends over time. Though this analysis will not be causal, it may suggest that the strategies are promising. For example, four of the five agencies are collecting data on the father's attendance at family team meetings. If trends in an agency's data show an increase in the number of family team meetings the fathers attend, that may suggest that strategies to improve the identification and location of fathers and to invite them to family team meetings are promising.

### V. Dissemination

With ACF, we are committed to developing products that will focus on three key areas: (1) creating a culture in the child welfare system that prioritizes thinking about and engaging fathers and paternal relatives; (2) contributing new evidence on creating a CQI framework for addressing challenges in the child welfare system; and (3) highlighting approaches that address large systemic challenges, such as the importance of addressing racial justice for men of color (see Section IV.A). We will develop products for key readers, including the sites participating in FCL; state and federal policymakers; child welfare agencies, program administrators, and practitioners; child welfare researchers, technical assistance providers, and advocacy organizations; and fatherhood programs.

In addition to this evaluation plan, we will develop and release a report in 2023 that describes findings from the descriptive evaluation and includes options for integrating promising strategies into other child welfare settings. We are also exploring different approaches to producing short, engaging products to reach a wide range of audiences.

### VI. Conclusion

Engaging fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare has the potential to improve child outcomes, but little is known about promising strategies to identify, engage, and sustain involvement of fathers and paternal relatives throughout the course of a child welfare case. Documenting the experiences of five child welfare agencies as they developed, piloted, scaled, and sustained father and paternal relative engagement strategies and approaches will contribute to the emerging understanding of best practices in this area and provide suggestive evidence of whether a BSC can be used to address pressing challenges in child welfare.

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## **Appendix A**

### **FCL Interview Topic Guide**

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## Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

### Staff and Stakeholder Interview: Topic Guide

This topic guide will help the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project team understand (1) the experiences of key staff and partners who were involved in efforts to enhance engagement of fathers and paternal relatives, including the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC), and (2) the community perceptions about the agency's efforts to engage fathers and paternal relatives. The respondents will include senior leaders; team managers and supervisors; frontline staff; partner leadership; partner frontline staff; and community stakeholders.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 90 minutes per interview. Providing information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected are kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0579, and the expiration date is 10/31/2023.

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project

### Staff and Stakeholder Interview: Topic Guide

#### Note to interviewer

The following detailed script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview without reading word-for-word from the script. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews.

### Background

#### 1. Introduce the moderator and co-facilitator

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. My name is [NAME,] and my colleague is [NAME]. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm, and we are here to learn about your experiences with the [CHILD WELFARE AGENCY].

*[If virtual]* We especially appreciate your willingness to participate in this site visit virtually given these circumstances.

#### 2. Explain the project and purpose of discussion

You should have received a copy of a Consent Information Form by email. If you did not, please let us know and we will send you that information. I'm going to review the content of that form before we begin.

We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare evaluation for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This project is designed to examine the use of the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) methodology to strengthen fathers' and paternal relatives' engagement with children involved in child welfare, and to add to the evidence base on engagement strategies for fathers and paternal relatives in child welfare.

The BSC is a collaborative learning approach in which multiple agencies test and spread promising practices to help themselves improve in a focused topic area. The BSC emphasizes the rapid use of data, feedback, and quality improvement to create organizational change and sustainable practices. Five agencies participated in the BSC. Each agency was represented in the BSC by staff with diverse roles who participated in a team-based learning approach, attended multiple in-person trainings, and received site-specific consultation about developing, testing, and adjusting their engagement strategies.

We are interested in hearing about your experiences working with [CHILD WELFARE AGENCY] and your efforts to enhance the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives with children involved in child welfare. We are interviewing key staff, partners, and other community stakeholders to learn about your agency's efforts to engage fathers and paternal relatives. These efforts may include both distinct "strategies" and more general "approaches" to increasing father and paternal relative engagement. Strategies are distinct changes to policy or practice, such as enhanced father locating procedures. We think of approaches more broadly, including things [CHILD WELFARE AGENCY] has done to make it

more welcoming to fathers and paternal relatives, such as staff training, knowledge sharing, and changes to the physical environment; approaches may also include multiple related strategies that together supported engagement. Both strategies and approaches may be important for increasing engagement among fathers and paternal relatives and changing agency culture, so we are interested in learning your perspectives on both.

### 3. Privacy and recording [Read this section verbatim]

We expect this discussion to take up to 90 minutes. Before we start, I want to let you know that your participation in this discussion is voluntary. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned. We will not connect your name to any of your responses, so please feel free to talk openly about your opinions. We will keep your identity private to the extent permitted by law.

We want to record the conversation so we make sure to capture the information you share accurately when we write reports. We will destroy the recording at the end of the project. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder. *[Site visitors: if recording is declined, please take notes.]*

Do we have your permission to record the conversation?

There are no consequences if you choose not to participate in this discussion. If you do not know the answer to a question, please say so, and we will simply move on. You do not have to answer any questions that you don't want to answer.

*If in person:* We also ask that you keep the discussion private, and do not share what we discuss here with others outside this room.

- *If virtual:* We ask that you keep this discussion private, and do not share the details of this conversation with anyone who isn't on the call today. We encourage you to find a quiet, private place where no one will overhear. *[If necessary:]* Also, we recognize that we are all working from home, and that is challenging for all of us. If you need to take a break or turn off your video to deal with any interruptions, don't worry, we understand. Does that sound okay? Do you have any questions or suggestions before we get started? If there are no other questions, I'll start the recording.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: 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. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0579, and it expires 10/31/2023.
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**Note to interviewer**

Before conducting interviews (either on site or virtually), and based on your current understanding of the site’s strategies, tailor this topic guide to be sure you capture information about the site’s engagement strategies and adjust the question phrasing as necessary to make sure respondents understand the questions.

Not all agencies will have respondents whose roles correspond to the ones in the upcoming tables. Some roles might be filled by more than one person or multiple roles might be filled by one person. Tailor the topic guide based on the following definitions:

- Senior leader: High-level child welfare administrator at each child welfare agency who oversaw the work of the Improvement Team
- Team manager and supervisors: Program manager, mid-level manager, and/or supervisors at each child welfare agency, responsible for supporting the work of the senior leader and Improvement Team members and overseeing frontline staff
- Frontline staff: Case managers or staff at the child welfare agency who work directly with fathers and paternal relatives and might have been a part of implementing strategies; this could include fathers and paternal relatives who participated on the Improvement Team and are formally employed by the agency
- Partner leadership: High-level administrator at partner agencies, such as court systems or fatherhood programs, who participated in formulating strategies and/or oversaw the work of partner frontline staff responsible for implementing strategies
- Partner frontline staff: Case managers or staff at the partner agency who work directly with fathers and paternal relatives and may have been a part of implementing strategies; this could include fathers and paternal relatives who participated on the Improvement Team and are formally employed by a partner
- Community stakeholder: community member whose role has intersected with the child welfare agency and has an interest in father and paternal engagement with the child welfare system, but was not formally part of formulating or implementing strategies.

**Table A.1. Number of topics covered, by staff role**

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm’ty stakeholder
A. Selecting strategies	4	3	0	4	0	2
B. Implementing strategies	6	7	5	8	4	6
C. Monitoring implementation	2	4	3	3	2	0
D. Shifting culture	6	6	6	6	6	3
E. Building on the BSC	9	3	0	5	0	4
F. Interview wrap-up	4	4	2	4	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>

**Table A.2. Topics to cover in interviews**

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<b>A. Selecting strategies</b>						
<p>1. In your opinion, what are the three or four main things that [child welfare agency] does to engage fathers and paternal relatives? <i>For those involved in the BSC:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>For each strategy mentioned: Was [strategy] something you conducted a PDSA on in the BSC?</i></li> <li>– <i>If yes: What did you learn in using PDSAs (Plan, Do, Study, Act) to test the strategy?</i></li> <li>– <i>If no: Was [strategy] something that [child welfare agency] did before participating in the BSC, or something that it developed after the BSC was completed?</i></li> </ul> <p><i>For community stakeholders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Has this always been your experience?</li> <li>– <i>If no: How has this changed; what was it like before, and when did this change?</i></li> <li>– <i>If yes: How long have you been involved or aware of [the child welfare agency's] work to engage fathers and paternal relatives?</i></li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		✓
<p>2. <i>For each strategy mentioned in Question 1: Who was involved in the decision to [continue with/develop] [strategy]?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What roles do these people play in [child welfare agency or community]?</li> <li>– What is their involvement in implementing [strategy]?</li> <li>– What kind of input did they provide in the decision to continue with [strategy]?</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p>3. For each strategy mentioned in Question 1: What information did you use when considering whether to [continue with/develop] [strategy]? (Probe for examples: BSC metrics, administrative data, staff feedback, participant feedback.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How did you decide to combine [strategies] together into a bundle?</li> <li>– Did the information or data you used have any limitations or shortcomings?</li> <li>– What would you have liked to know about [strategy] before you decided to continue it, but didn't?</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		
<p>4. What other things that you haven't mentioned above does [child welfare agency] do to engage fathers and paternal relatives or cultivate racial equity?</p>	✓	✓		✓		✓
<b>B. Implementing strategies</b>						
<p>1. Please walk me through how you engage fathers and paternal relatives and cultivate racial equity for fathers and paternal relatives in your daily work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How is this different from how you worked with and viewed fathers and paternal relatives before [child welfare agency] participated in the BSC?</li> <li>– How is this different from how you worked with and viewed fathers and paternal relatives [when you started at agency/at the start of your career]?</li> <li>– How is this different from how [child welfare agency] has addressed racial inequity in the past?</li> </ul> <p>1a. For community stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How does [child welfare agency] cultivate racial equity for fathers and paternal relatives in their work?</li> <li>– How has this changed, if at all, from the way the child welfare agency worked before?</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p>2. For each strategy or approach mentioned in Section A: Is [strategy/approach] implemented the way it was originally intended?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– [If no] To your understanding, what was the original plan for how [strategy/approach] was supposed to work?</li> <li>– In your opinion, what are the key differences in how [strategy/approach] is implemented now, compared to how it was implemented when you first started?</li> <li>– Specifically, what is your role in [strategy/approach] and how has it changed from the original plans?</li> <li>– Why did the plans change?</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		
<p>3. How has [child welfare agency's] approach to engaging fathers and paternal relatives grown over time? For example, have more staff, offices and/or partners become involved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Did you collect any information or feedback about how any particular strategies were working? Which ones? If so, did that information contribute to changes in the implementation plan?</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		✓
<p>4. For each strategy/approach mentioned in Section A: We've talked a little about your role in [strategy/approach]. What other roles are involved in implementing [strategy/approach] now?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What are their responsibilities? (for example, interacting directly with fathers and paternal relatives, monitoring fidelity, collecting data, providing supervision and oversight)</li> <li>– Have there been any changes in these roles and responsibilities over time?</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p>5. For each strategy/approach mentioned in Section A: On the whole, how easy or hard would you say it has been to implement and grow [strategy]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In your opinion, how easy or hard has it been to grow [strategy/approach] within [child welfare agency]?</li> <li>– What factors within [child welfare agency/partner organization] have made it harder to implement or grow [strategy/approach]? (For example, lack of staff buy in, additional data collection burdens, bureaucratic inertia.)</li> <li>– What factors within [child welfare agency/partner organization] have helped the implementation or growth of [strategy/approach]? (For example, engaged and invested leadership, funding, media attention.)</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		
<p>6. On the whole, how easy or hard would you say it has been to engage fathers and paternal relatives in your daily work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What factors within [child welfare agency/partner organization] have made it harder to engage fathers and paternal relatives? (For example, lack of staff buy in, additional data collection burdens, bureaucratic inertia.)</li> <li>– What factors within [child welfare agency/partner organization] have helped engage fathers and paternal relatives? (For example, engaged and invested leadership, funding, media attention.)</li> </ul>			✓		✓	
<p>7. Thinking back, how did the COVID-19 pandemic disrupt or affect father and paternal relative engagement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Were there other environmental or community issues that affected father and paternal relative engagement? If yes, in what ways?</li> <li>– <i>For community stakeholders:</i> How did COVID-19 affect the fathers and paternal relatives you work with? How did it affect their interactions with the child welfare system?</li> </ul>			✓	✓	✓	✓



Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p>8. Now, I'd like you think about public policy. Was there any legislation, administrative rules, funding requirements, or federal, state, or local policies that affected implementation? If so, in what ways?</p> <p><i>For community stakeholders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What laws or other policies affect the extent to which the fathers you work with engage with the child welfare system?</li> </ul>	✓			✓		✓
<p>9. If you had to pick the greatest success of father and paternal relative engagement, what would it be? Why?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What would you say the greatest challenge has been, and why?</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<p>10. Since starting to implement enhancements to the way [child welfare agency] engages fathers and paternal relatives developed under the BSC, have you noticed any changes in outcomes related to the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If so, what changes have you seen?</li> <li>– To what extent do you think these are the <i>result</i> of the strategy, or something else?</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>C. Monitoring implementation</b>						
<p>1. What are [child welfare agency's] goals for engaging fathers and paternal relatives and cultivating racial equity for fathers and paternal relatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How would you know whether you were on the right track for meeting those goals?</li> <li>– <i>For each strategy/approach mentioned in Section A:</i> What would it take for you to be able to say that [strategy/approach] has been a success?</li> </ul>	✓					
<p>2. <i>For each strategy/approach mentioned in Section A:</i> Thinking about where you are now, and given [child welfare agency's] goals, would you say that [strategy/approach] has been successful? Why or why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– [If strategy/approach has not been successful] What needs to change for [strategy/approach] to be successful?</li> </ul>		✓		✓		

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p>3. For each strategy/approach mentioned in Section A: How do you know whether [strategy/approach] is implemented as intended?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Who is responsible for collecting this information?</li> <li>– How frequently is it collected?</li> <li>– How do you use the information once it is collected?</li> <li>– What other practices does [child welfare agency] have for monitoring the [strategy/approach]?</li> </ul>		✓		✓		
<p>4. For each strategy/approach mentioned in Section A: What are the key client-level outcomes that [strategy/approach] is intended to affect?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How do you know if [strategy/approach] is making a difference in these outcomes?</li> <li>– What data do you collect on these outcomes?</li> <li>– How frequently are data collected?</li> <li>– Where are these data stored?</li> <li>– Who is responsible for collecting and entering these data?</li> <li>– Who is responsible for reviewing these data?</li> <li>– Can you think of an example of how you have used these data to assess the success of [strategy/approach] or improve it?</li> </ul>		✓	✓	✓	✓	
<p>5. What has made it hard to collect or use data to assess the success of strategies and approaches to engage father and paternal relatives and cultivate racial equity for fathers and paternal relatives? (for example, lack of an accessible, centralized data system, lack of a process for checking the reliability of the data, data collection is burdensome, strategy is not designed to directly affect client outcomes)</p>		✓	✓		✓	

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p><b>6.</b> How do you assess the completeness and accuracy of data you collect about strategies and approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives and cultivate racial equity for fathers and paternal relatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– In your opinion, how complete and accurate are these data?</li> <li>– What processes have you put in place to improve the quality of the data?</li> <li>– What would be helpful to you to improve the quality of the data?</li> </ul>	✓		✓			

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<b>D. Shifting culture</b>						
<p>1. In your own words, what are the core values of [child welfare agency]?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What messages are you given by senior leadership about how you do your job?</li> <li>- What messages do you try to convey to your staff about how they should approach their work? About engaging fathers and paternal relatives? About racial equity?</li> <li>- Ask for each value: In your own opinion, how central is [father and paternal relative engagement/cultivating racial equity] to [child welfare agency's] core values? Why?</li> <li>- To what extent do your supervisor or other leaders encourage you to involve fathers and paternal relatives in cases?</li> <li>- To what extent has your supervisor or other leaders explicitly discussed racial equity with you and your colleagues?</li> <li>- Ask for each value: To what extent does [child welfare agency] recognize or reward staff for their efforts to [improve father and paternal relative engagement/promote racial equity]?</li> <li>- Ask for each value: What changes have you noticed to [child welfare agency's] organizational culture related to [fathers and paternal relatives/cultivating racial equity] since beginning to implement [strategy]? (for example: changes in mission and values statements, how staff talk about fathers and paternal relatives and/or racial equity, formal changes in policies and practices, environmental changes, changes in who is hired and represented on staff)</li> </ul> <p><i>For community stakeholders:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In what ways are the core values communicated to you and other community stakeholders?</li> <li>- How do these core values align with your/your organization's core values?</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
2. How do you think that the father and paternal engagement strategies or approaches to cultivating racial equity for fathers and paternal relatives we've discussed have contributed to any of the changes you have observed in organizational culture at [child welfare agency]?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. What training or professional development have you been offered about fathers and paternal relatives or racial equity? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For each training: When was it offered?</li> <li>– Was this a one-time opportunity or something that has been offered multiple times?</li> <li>– Was it optional for staff, or required? If optional, did you participate?</li> <li>– If respondent participated: How helpful was the training or professional development opportunity? Why?</li> <li>– If respondent did not participate: What kept you from being able to participate, or why did you choose not to participate?</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. Aside from trainings or professional development, what other supports or resources does [child welfare agency] provide about father and paternal relative engagement or racial equity? (For example, manuals or guides, coaching, literature/tip sheets. Or for community stakeholders, community forums or other engagement events.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Have you used these supports?</li> <li>– If no: Why not?</li> <li>– If yes: How helpful have you found them, and why?</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>E. Building on the BSC</b>						
1. Prior to participating in the BSC, what was [child welfare agency's] process for planning and implementing improvements to program operations? <p>What continuous quality improvement processes were already in place?</p>	✓					
2. How has participating in the BSC changed the way [child welfare agency] approaches continuous quality improvement?	✓			✓		

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
<p>3. Are there specific BSC elements that [child welfare agency] has continued using since the BSC ended in March 2021? (for example: convening an improvement team, using an online shared learning environment, using a rapid-cycle model for improvement, such as PDSAs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– If yes: Which ones, and why? Can you give an example or situation when the BSC element has been used?</li> <li>– If no: What kept [child welfare agency] from continuing to use BSC elements?</li> <li>– What has made it easy or hard to continue using BSC elements?</li> <li>– If applicable: Why were some elements not continued?</li> </ul>	✓	✓				
<p>4. One of the core elements of the BSC was the creation of a multilevel inclusive team to lead change in an organization. While it was up to each child welfare agency to determine the makeup of this team, they were encouraged to include fathers and/or paternal relatives themselves. How successful do you think you have been in involving fathers and paternal relatives as decision makers? Why or why not?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– What role did individual fathers and paternal relatives play in the BSC?</li> <li>– Since the BSC ended, how have you been able to involve fathers and paternal relatives? Going forward, what do you think the ideal involvement of fathers and paternal relatives would be?</li> <li>– What would make it hard to get that level of involvement?</li> <li>– Do you currently have any plans to involve fathers and paternal relatives as decision makers?</li> </ul>	✓	✓		✓		
<p>5. How, if at all, have community partners been involved in engaging fathers and paternal relatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Who are your most important community partners?</li> <li>– How do you expect they will continue to be involved in efforts to engage fathers and paternal relatives?</li> </ul>	✓			✓		✓

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare

Topic	Senior leaders	Team managers and supervisors	Frontline staff	Partner leadership	Partner frontline staff	Comm'ty stakeholder
6. What do you think are the biggest practice or service challenges facing [child welfare agency] today?	✓			✓		✓
7. What thoughts or discussions have you had about how to address those challenges? – What elements of the BSC do you think would be particularly helpful in addressing those challenges? (for example, using PDSAs to test strategies, collecting and analyzing data)	✓	✓				✓
8. Who are the most important stakeholders to involve in addressing these challenges?	✓					✓
<b>F. Interview wrap-up</b>						
1. Thinking back, what has been the most rewarding part of participating in the BSC? – What was most challenging part of participating?	✓	✓		✓		
2. What are the biggest lessons that you have learned from participating in the BSC? – What would you say has been the biggest influence that participation has had on [child welfare agency]?	✓	✓		✓		
3. Overall, reflecting on [child welfare agency's] approach to father and paternal engagement, what would you say have been the biggest benefits to fathers and paternal relatives?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Is there anything else that you think is important for us to understand about how the child welfare agency has changed as a result of BSC participation? – Personally, what have been the biggest lessons you have learned? – <i>For community stakeholders:</i> Is there anything else that you think is important for us to understand about how the child welfare agency has changed over the past several years?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us today.

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## **Appendix B**

### **Father and Paternal Relative Focus Group**

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## Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative

### Focus group with fathers and paternal relatives

This focus group will help the FCL project team understand fathers' and paternal relatives' experiences with the child welfare system and whether they have noticed any changes in how they are treated or engaged by staff at child welfare agencies over the course of their most recent involvement with the child welfare system. The respondents will include fathers and paternal relatives who have had experiences with the focal child welfare agency relatively recently (including, if possible, individual interviews for those who participated on Improvement Teams). The protocol is designed to be used in an individual interview if necessary.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 90 minutes per focus group. Providing information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected are kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0579, and the expiration date is 10/31/2023.

## Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project

### Focus group with fathers and paternal relatives

#### Note to interviewer

The following detailed script should not be read verbatim. As the interviewer, you must be familiar enough with the script to introduce the study and the focus of the interview, and adapt the language for an individual interview, without reading from the script word-for-word. Please familiarize yourself thoroughly with the text before you conduct interviews. Respondents for this focus group will include:

- Fathers and paternal relatives: individuals who have had relatively recent experiences with the focal child welfare agency (including, if possible, individual interviews for those who participated on Improvement Teams)

### A. Background

#### 1. Introduce the moderator and co-facilitator

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. My name is [NAME], and my colleague is [NAME]. We are from Mathematica, an independent research firm, and we are here to learn about your experiences with the [AGENCY].

#### 2. Explain the project and purpose of the discussion

I am going to start out by giving you a bit of background and talk about why we wanted to meet with you today. We are conducting the Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project for the Administration for Children and Families, which is part of the United States Department of Health and Human Services. We are talking with fathers and paternal relatives about their experiences with the [AGENCY]. Talking with people like yourselves who have worked with [AGENCY] will help us learn about how well the agency worked with you.

#### 3. Privacy and recording [Read this section verbatim]

We expect this discussion to take about 90 minutes [60 minutes for an interview]. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we have learned, and we will not connect your name to your response, so please share your opinions freely. We will keep your identity private to the extent permitted by law.

We want to record what you share to make sure we capture the information as we write up reports. We will destroy the recording once we have created a transcription. If you want to say anything that you do not want recorded, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder. [*Site visitors: if recording is declined, please take notes.*]

There are no consequences if you choose not to participate in this discussion. If you do not know the answer to a question, please let us know, and we will move on. If you prefer not to answer a question for any reason, you do not have to. Your responses will not affect any services or benefits you or your family members receive.

Do we have your permission to proceed with the discussion?

#### 4. Agreeing on the terms of the discussion

We value the information you will share with us, and your participation in this discussion is voluntary.

[If focus group]: To make this a safe space, I am asking that we all make the following commitments to each other:

- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. This will be an informal discussion. We are interested in learning everyone's opinion.
- *If virtual focus group:* We have unmuted all of you so you can talk as if we are in a room together. We want all of you to share your thoughts, but please let one person talk at a time. If you are not speaking, you may want to mute your line. If something someone says sparks your thinking (like you agree, disagree, or want to build upon something that you hear), please speak up at any time. You can either just jump in or signal to us that you have something to say by holding up your hand in front of the video [*facilitator demonstrates*].
- *If in-person focus group:* We want all of you to share your thoughts, but please let one person talk at a time.
- *If virtual:* If it is possible for you to turn on your video, please do so. It's easier to have a conversation when we can see others' faces.
- To help us learn all that we can, I might change the subject or move ahead from time to time.
- *If focus group:* Please feel free to step away whenever you need to. There will be no formal breaks.
- *If in person focus group:* We also ask that you keep this discussion private, and do not share what we say here with anyone outside this room. Use first names only to identify yourself or others.
- *If virtual focus group:* We ask that you keep this discussion private, and do not share the details of this conversation with anyone who isn't on the call today. We encourage you to find a quiet, private place where you feel comfortable sharing and where no one will overhear.
- After our discussion, you will receive a \$35 gift card to offset any costs from your participation. You will receive the gift card even if you do not get a chance to answer all of the questions.

[If individual interview]

- There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. This will be an informal discussion. We are interested in hearing your opinion.
- We ask that you keep this discussion private. We encourage you to find a quiet, private place where you feel comfortable sharing and where no one will overhear.
- After our discussion, you will receive a \$35 gift card to offset any costs from your participation. You will receive the gift card even if we do not get through all of the questions.

Does that sound okay? Do you have any questions or suggestions before we get started?

[If focus group] First, let's start by quickly going around the room and introducing yourselves with your first name only.

Thank you again for joining today. Now, I'll start the recorder. *[Site visitors: Only start the recorder after everyone has introduced themselves].*

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: 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. The OMB control number for this collection is 0970-0579, and it expires 10/31/2023. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Matthew Stagner; [MStagner@Mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:MStagner@Mathematica-mpr.com)

### B. Please tell us a little bit about how and when you most recently became involved with the [AGENCY].

*[Probe on the following if needed]*

1. For example, how and when did you learn about the [AGENCY]'s open investigation on your child or relative? Or that [AGENCY] was considering placing your child or relative in foster care? Or that your child or relative was in foster care?

### C. Once you were aware of the agency's involvement with your family, how (if at all) were you involved with the case?

*[Probe on the following if needed]*

1. Who contacted you about your family's involvement?

### D. Once you were involved, what kinds of activities did you participate in?

*[Probe on the following if needed: case planning meetings, such as activities to develop case plans; conversations with agency staff aimed at assessing your progress; family conferences; routine home visits; visits with your child or relative; court hearings; meetings focused on the needs of the child, such as medical visits and meetings with the education system; parenting classes; fatherhood groups]*

1. Thinking about all of the services you received through [AGENCY], which services were most helpful to you?
  - a. Which were least helpful to you?
2. How has your satisfaction with the services you received changed over time?

### E. Who, if anybody, encouraged you or helped you to participate in activities, such as case planning meetings or court hearings?

*[Probe on the following if needed]*

1. How did agency staff, lawyers, counselors, and other staff encourage you to participate?
2. What, if anything, did they do to support your participating in these activities? *[Probe: provide transportation support or meals, connect you to fatherhood groups, reach out via text or social media?]*
3. How important were these to you as a reason to either participate or continue participating? What else allowed you to participate?

4. Thinking about the different people you deal with in the child welfare system, like lawyers, judges, and court officials, who was most welcoming? What did they do that was welcoming?
    1. Who was most helpful to you? What did they do that was helpful?
    2. Who could have done more? What would you have liked them to do?
  5. How has your satisfaction with the people you worked with while your case was open changed over time?
- F. What made it difficult for you to participate? How, if at all, did [AGENCY] help you overcome those difficulties?

*[Probe on the following if needed]*

1. What else would have been helpful?
2. What could [AGENCY] have done to make your experience with them better?

G. How well do you think that your case manager understood your needs? How so?

*[Probe on the following if needed]*

1. Has the way your case manager works with you changed over time? How does it compare to your experience with case managers in the past? In what ways?
2. Overall, how satisfied are you with the individual support [AGENCY] has provided to help you resolve your family's child welfare case? Why?

H. In what ways were your involvement and interactions with [AGENCY] different than what you expected?

*[Probe on the following if needed]*

1. Thinking about all of your experiences with [AGENCY], what did [AGENCY] do that made you feel empowered to participate in resolving your family's child welfare case?
2. What did [AGENCY] do that made you feel like you were an important player in resolving your family's child welfare case?

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us today.

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## **Appendix C**

### **FCL Child Welfare and Partner Staff Survey**

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# **Engaging Fathers and Paternal Relatives in Child Welfare Breakthrough Series Collaborative**

## **Child Welfare and Partner Staff Survey**

**FINAL**

*October 26, 2021*

This information collection will help the project team on the fathers and continuous learning in child welfare project understand each site's organizational culture and individual practices related to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. The survey will be administered to implementing staff at child welfare agencies and partner agencies.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 20 minutes per response. Providing information is voluntary, and all responses that are collected are kept private to the extent permitted by law.

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. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0579, and the expiration date is 10/31/2023.

**FATHERS AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING IN CHILD WELFARE (FCL) PROJECT  
CHILD WELFARE AND PARTNER STAFF SURVEY**

This survey aims to understand each site's organizational culture and individual practices related to engaging fathers and paternal relatives. The Fathers and Continuous Learning in Child Welfare (FCL) project team will use this information to assess (1) how implementing the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) may have contributed to the launch and potential sustainment of strategies for engaging fathers and paternal relatives and (2) how participating in the BSC may facilitate organization-level or system-level shifts in the culture of child welfare agencies surrounding the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives. This survey will be administered twice.

The average estimated public reporting burden for this collection of information is about 20 minutes per response. Providing this information is voluntary. You can refuse to answer any questions that you wish to. All responses that are collected are private to the extent permitted by law.

The research is covered by a Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health. This means no one can force the researchers to share information that could identify you, even if a court orders them to share information, in any federal, state, or local civil, criminal, administrative, legislative, or other proceedings. The only exception is that the Certificate does not prevent the researchers from sharing information that would identify you as a participant in the project if you tell the interviewers anything that suggests you are very likely to harm yourself, that you are planning to hurt another person or child, or that someone is likely to harm you. A Certificate of Confidentiality does not prevent you from voluntarily releasing information about yourself or your involvement in this research. If you want your research information released to any other person not connected with the research, you must give consent to allow the researchers to release it.

The answers of all respondents will be combined to ensure you remain anonymous in any reports. The survey does not ask for your name, and background information is collected for analytic purposes only. Survey responses are encrypted in transit and at rest. The study team will be careful to protect all the information collected from this survey, but there is a small risk that non-researchers could see it.

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. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0579, and the expiration date is 10/31/2023.

This project is supported by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under contract number HHSP233201500035I/ HHSP23337025T. If you have any questions about this data collection, you can contact the FCL project director, Matthew Stagner, at (312) 994-1044 or [mstagner@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:mstagner@mathematica-mpr.com).

**PURPOSE**

In this survey, you are asked to assess your agency's organizational culture and how much it values engaging fathers and paternal relatives. Data collected from this survey will increase understanding of how implementing the BSC may have contributed to the (1) launch of strategies to engage fathers and paternal relatives and (2) organizational-level or system-level shifts in the culture surrounding the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives. Thank you for taking the time to candidly and thoughtfully share your experience with us. Please complete this survey by [date].

**A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION (DEMOGRAPHICS)**

**A1. How do you describe yourself?**

- Male ..... 1
- Female ..... 2
- Transgender ..... 3
- Gender nonconforming ..... 4
- Do not identify as female, male, or transgender ..... 5
- Prefer not to answer ..... 6

**A2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- High school or GED ..... 1
- Some college ..... 2
- Associate's degree (A.A.) ..... 3
- Bachelor's degree (B.A. or B.S.) ..... 4
- Some graduate work ..... 5
- Postgraduate degree (such as master's degree, J.D., Ed.D, or Ph.D.) ..... 6
- Other (please specify): ..... 7

**A3. What is your ethnicity?**

- Hispanic or Latino ..... 1
- Not Hispanic or Latino ..... 2

**A4. What is your race?**

*Select all that apply*

- Black or African American ..... 1
- White ..... 2
- Asian ..... 3
- American Indian or Alaska Native ..... 4
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander ..... 5
- Other (please specify) ..... 6

**A5. Select the job title that best describes your current role in your child welfare agency or organization.**

- Caseworker/case manager (including those contracted by [AGENCY] and carrying cases) ..... 1
- Case aide ..... 2
- Supervisor ..... 3
- Program director ..... 4
- Agency director ..... 5
- Staff in a special program within the child welfare agency (parent support or reunification services) ..... 6
- Community partner (local agency or organization working in collaboration with [AGENCY]). (Please specify job title):..... 7
- Other (please specify): ..... 8

**A6. How long have you worked in this field?**

years       months

**B. AGENCY VALUES**

**B1. Please read the following statements, and choose the answer that shows how much you agree with each statement:**

*SELECT ONE ONLY*

*[Items adapted from the Implementation Climate Scale]*

	Agree to a very great extent	Agree to a great extent	Agree to a moderate extent	Agree to a slight extent	Do not agree at all	n.a.
a. One of [AGENCY]'s goals is to effectively engage fathers and paternal relatives in case activities.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
b. Staff in [AGENCY] think that engaging fathers and paternal relatives is important.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
c. Connecting fathers and paternal relatives to services is important to [AGENCY] leadership.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
d. Most staff at [AGENCY] are interested in improving their ability to work with fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
e. The ability to effectively engage fathers and paternal relatives is one of the key skills [AGENCY] looks for in new hires.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
f. [Agency] leaders encourage staff to spend time reaching out to and involving fathers and paternal relatives in case activities.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
g. [Agency] leaders encourage staff to connect fathers and paternal relatives to supportive services.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>



**C. AGENCY SUPPORT**

**C1. Please read the following statements, and choose the answer that shows how much you agree with each statement:**

*SELECT ONE ONLY*

*[Items adapted from the Implementation Climate Scale]*

	Agree to a very great extent	Agree to a great extent	Agree to a moderate extent	Agree to a slight extent	Do not agree at all	n.a.
a. [AGENCY] provides professional development opportunities to develop staff skills in engaging fathers and paternal relatives in case activities.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
b. [AGENCY] provides training materials about engaging fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
c. My supervisor checks in often about what I am doing to engage fathers and paternal relatives in case activities.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
d. My supervisor has expectations for how often I contact fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>

**D. PERSPECTIVES ON AGENCY STAFF**

**D1. Please read the following statements and indicate how much you agree with each one:**

*SELECT ONE ONLY*

*[Items adapted from the Implementation Climate Scale]*

	Agree to a very great extent	Agree to a great extent	Agree to a moderate extent	Agree to a slight extent	Do not agree at all	n.a.
a. Staff at [AGENCY] are adaptable.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
b. Staff at [AGENCY] are flexible.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
c. Staff at [AGENCY] value fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
d. Staff at [AGENCY] are open to new engagement strategies and approaches for fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
e. Staff at [AGENCY] want to improve how they work with fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
f. Staff at [AGENCY] believe involving fathers and paternal relatives is just as important as involving mothers and maternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
g. Staff at [AGENCY] believe the agency should treat fathers and paternal relatives the same way mothers and maternal relatives are treated.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>

**E. MONITORING**

**E1. Please read the following statements, and choose the answer that shows how much you agree with each statement:**

*SELECT ONE ONLY*

	Agree to a very great extent	Agree to a great extent	Agree to a moderate extent	Agree to a slight extent	Do not agree at all	n.a.
a. I am required to document my efforts to engage fathers.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
b. I am required to document my efforts to engage paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
c. [AGENCY] uses information I provide about father and paternal relative engagement to inform its decisions.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
d. I attend meetings where data are used to understand father and paternal relative engagement.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
e. I often attend meetings with my colleagues where I discuss my attempts to involve fathers and parental relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
f. I personally document my efforts to involve fathers and paternal relatives (for example, I record the number of times I contacted a father or paternal relative).	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
g. I use data to improve my engagement of fathers and paternal relatives (for example, I record the different methods of communication I have used to engage fathers and paternal relatives, and which methods they are most responsive to).	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>

**F. EXPERIENCE USING NEW STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES**

**F1. Please read the following statements about using new strategies, and choose the answer that best reflects how much you agree with each one:**

*SELECT ONE ONLY*

*[Items adapted from the Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale]*

	Agree to a very great extent	Agree to a great extent	Agree to a moderate extent	Agree to a slight extent	Do not agree at all	n.a.
a. I like to use new strategies and approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
b. I am willing to try new strategies and approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
c. When it comes to engaging fathers and paternal relatives, I rely more on my experience than what I have learned from research.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
d. I would prefer not to use new strategies or approaches to engage fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
e. I would try a new strategy or approach to engage fathers and paternal relatives even if it were very different from what I am used to doing.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>

**G. EXPERIENCE ENGAGING FATHERS AND PATERNAL RELATIVES**

**G1. Please read the following statements about your experience engaging fathers and paternal relatives, and indicate how strongly you agree with each one:**

*SELECT ONE ONLY*

	Agree to a very great extent	Agree to a great extent	Agree to a moderate extent	Agree to a slight extent	Do not agree at all	n.a.
a. Engaging fathers and paternal relatives makes my job easier.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
b. Engaging fathers and paternal relatives makes my job more complicated.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
c. I enjoy working with my colleagues on engaging fathers and paternal relatives.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
d. Spending time engaging fathers and paternal relatives means I have less time to dedicate to my other cases.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
e. Engaging fathers and paternal relatives is rewarding.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
f. Engaging fathers and paternal relatives has created more work for me.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
g. Engaging fathers improves the lives of the children whose cases I work on.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>
h. Engaging paternal relatives improves the lives of the children whose cases I work on.	1 <input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="radio"/>	3 <input type="radio"/>	4 <input type="radio"/>	5 <input type="radio"/>	n.a. <input type="radio"/>

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