

Services Supporting Responsible Fatherhood

The federal government has a long-standing commitment to supporting father involvement in their children's and families' lives. Since 2005, Congress has funded \$150 million each year in healthy marriage (HM) and responsible fatherhood (RF) grants. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has awarded and overseen three cohorts of these grants. OFA works with the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, also within ACF, to conduct research on how to best serve families through these grants.

This snapshot describes services provided by the 2015 cohort of RF grantees. To build clients' relationship and parenting skills and support their economic well-being, RF grantees provide a range of services, including group-based workshops, which are typically the centerpiece of the program. Grantees also provide individual service contacts (such as case management) and referrals for services offered by other organizations. With ACF's approval, some grantees also give incentives, such as gift cards, to encourage clients' participation or to recognize when clients reach program milestones. See Box 1 for practice tips on using the data in this snapshot.

Box 1. Practice tips

This snapshot describes services at 40 RF grantees. The information is intended to increase the field's understanding of services that RF programs provide for clients. Connecting clients to high quality services is critical to program success. However, the snapshot does not assess whether the services described here are associated with better program performance or client outcomes.

When designing and improving program services, practitioners should consider the following:

- **The workshop content and length that is the best fit for your program and clients.** The section on characteristics of RF workshops shows the workshop activities and lengths commonly provided by RF grantees.
- **The ways in which other supports, such as one-on-one meetings or services provided by partners, can complement workshops.** The sections on individualized service contacts, referrals, and incentives describe these other supports that RF program clients received.
- **How to encourage client participation in services.** The sections on RF clients' participation in services and on client participation in workshops describe patterns of client participation in services across RF grantees.

Methods

This snapshot describes services provided by 40 RF grantees that received five-year grants in September 2015. See Box 2 for RF grantees' three legislatively authorized activities; ACF required RF grantees to offer all three as part of their program services. Grantee staff must report on all services provided through the grant, including the type of service, the service duration, and the clients who received the service. They report this information by using an online management information system called nFORM (Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management) that was developed for HMRP grantees. This snapshot uses nFORM data on services provided from July 2016 (the last quarter of the first grant year) through March 2019 (the first half of the fourth grant year). Separate snapshots describe services provided by HM grantees, and an interim report describes a fuller range of findings, including client characteristics and the ways that clients changed from the beginning of the program to the end.¹

Box 2. Legislatively authorized RF activities

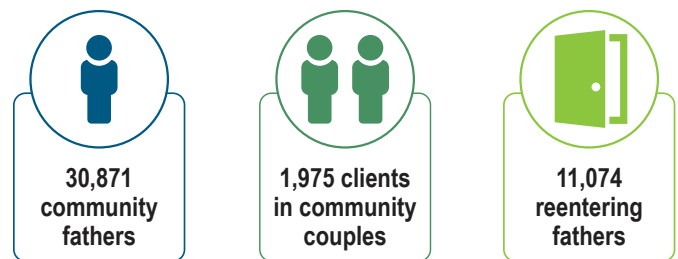
- Promote or sustain marriage (that is, healthy marriage and relationship education)
- Promote responsible parenting
- Foster economic stability

Client populations served in RF programs

The RF grantees enrolled just under 44,000 clients in nearly three years (Figure 1). RF grantees can serve up to three distinct client populations:

- 1. RF community fathers.** Adults enrolled in an RF program offered in the community.
- 2. RF community couples.** Adults enrolled in an RF program with another individual who might be a romantic partner, a co-parent of their child, or another adult raising a child with the father. Programs served both partners. Because the number of RF community couples was small, this snapshot combined results for RF community couples and RF community fathers.²
- 3. RF reentering fathers.**³ Incarcerated adults who were reentering the community and to be released within three to nine months or who were recently released from incarceration (up to six months earlier) and were enrolled in an RF program. These programs were often offered in a prison or jail.

Figure 1. Clients enrolled, by RF target population, from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019



Source: nFORM data for RF enrollment from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

¹Avellar, Sarah, Alexandra Stanczyk, Nikki Aikens, Mathew Stange, and Grace Roemer. "The 2015 Cohort of Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantees: Interim Report on Grantee and Client Characteristics." OPRE Report 2020-67. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020.

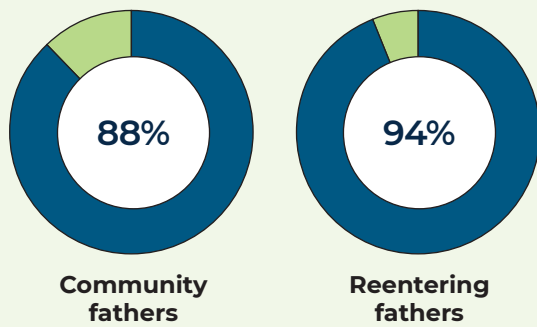
²We analyzed clients individually, including those who enrolled with their partner as a couple. However, both members of the couple had to attend a workshop for their attendance to be counted.

³In the interim report (Avellar et al. 2020), this population is referred to as "incarcerated fathers."

RF clients' participation in services

Almost all RF clients participated in services. Of those who enrolled, over 90 percent of reentering fathers and 88 percent of community fathers participated in at least one service (Box 3). Services could include workshops or service contacts that lasted at least 15 minutes. We did not include shorter contacts (fewer than 15 minutes) because they were likely to be reminders about upcoming services or other interactions that were not substantive.

Box 3. RF clients who participated in any service

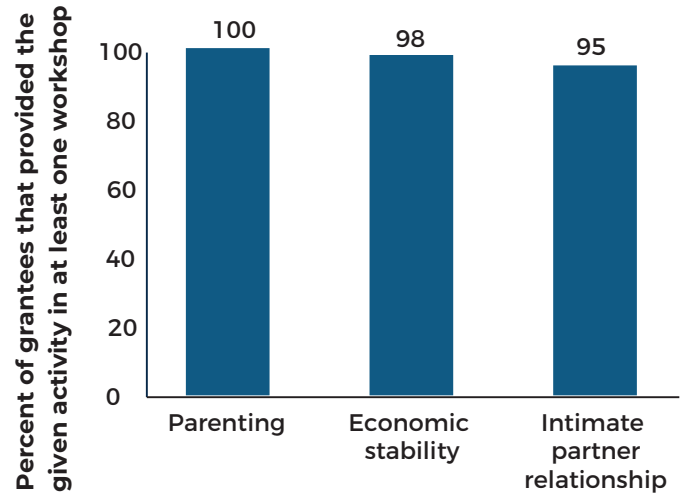


Client participation in services typically spanned five to six weeks. The typical (median) time between clients' first and last service was about five weeks (38 days) for community fathers and six weeks for reentering fathers (43 days).

Characteristics of RF workshops

All grantees offered workshops in parenting. RF grantees are required to offer services in (1) parenting, (2) healthy relationships, and (3) economic stability. All RF grantees offered at least one workshop that included parenting activities (Figure 2). Nearly all RF grantees offered activities related to economic stability and intimate partner relationships.

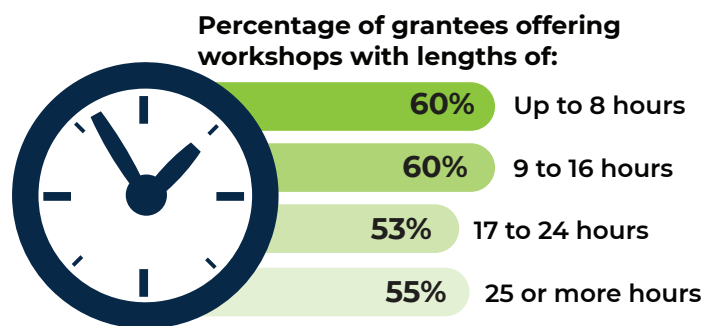
Figure 2. Workshop activities provided by RF programs



Source: nFORM data for RF workshops with sessions that occurred from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

RF grantees offered shorter and longer workshops. More than half of the grantees provided workshops lasting eight or fewer hours. About half of the grantees offered workshops lasting 25 or more hours (Figure 3). The average workshop was 27 hours and 10 sessions.

Figure 3. Length of RF workshops



Average workshop hours: 27

Average number of workshop sessions: 10

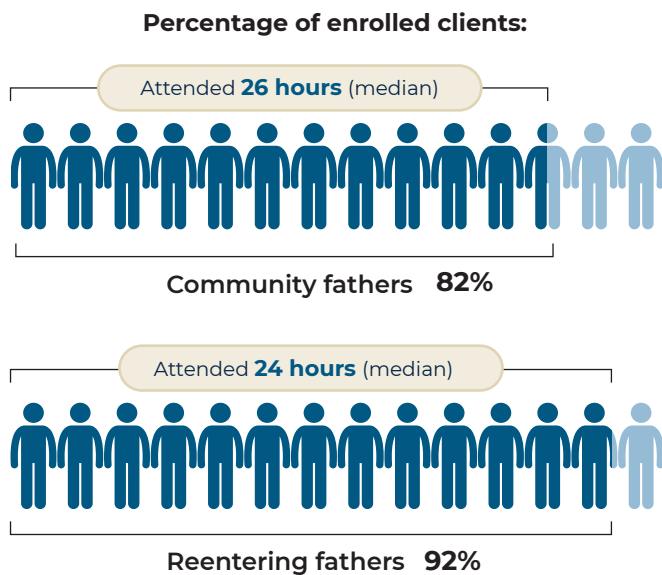
Source: nFORM data for RF workshops with sessions that occurred from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

Note: Because grantees can offer more than one workshop, the percentages do not add up to 100.

Client participation in workshops

Almost all fathers attended workshops and those who participated received about 25 workshop hours. Of those who enrolled, more than 80 percent of community fathers and 92 percent of reentering fathers attended at least one workshop session (Figure 4). Among those who attended at least one workshop session, community fathers typically received 26 workshop hours (median) and reentering fathers typically received 24 hours.

Figure 4. Participation in workshops among RF clients



Source: nFORM data from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

Individualized service contacts

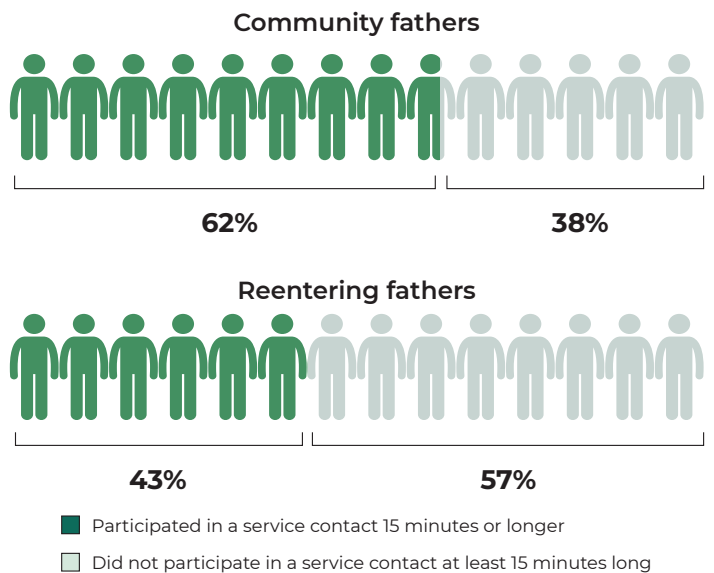
Most community fathers participated in individual service contacts, but most reentering fathers did not. Clients in RF programs sometimes met one-on-one with grantee staff to discuss issues they were facing, learn about available resources, make up workshop content, or reinforce skills learned in workshops. Grantees were also required to offer case management unless they received an exemption from ACF. More than 60 percent of community fathers and more than 40 percent of reentering

fathers participated in one or more one-on-one service contacts lasting 15 minutes or longer (Figure 5). Including both those who did and did not receive service contacts, community fathers typically received two service contacts lasting at least 15 minutes (median), whereas reentering fathers typically received no service contacts of that length.

The three most common topics discussed during substantive service contacts were the same for community and reentering fathers. Among all enrolled community fathers, 27 percent received substantive contacts related to job and career advancement, 26 percent received assessment-related contacts (such as a needs assessment or assessment of job readiness), and 21 percent received parenting-related contacts (Table 1).

Among all enrolled reentering fathers, 12 percent received substantive service contacts related to parenting, 11 percent received assessment-related contacts, and 10 percent received job and career advancement-related contacts.

Figure 5. Participation in individualized service contacts among RF clients



Source: nFORM data from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

Table 1. Client issues and needs commonly discussed at service contacts

	Community fathers (%)	Reentering fathers (%)
Job and career advancement	27	10
Assessment	26	11
Parenting	21	12
Social services and emergency needs	14	8
Healthy marriage and relationship education services	12	7
Education	10	5
Number of clients	32,846	11,074

Source: nFORM data from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

Note: The table shows the percentage of enrolled clients with at least one service contact lasting 15 minutes or more in which they discussed a specified topic. Many clients did not participate in any service contacts.

The locations in which service contacts took place differed across the two populations in expected ways.

Community fathers most commonly participated in substantive service contacts in the grantee’s program office (41 percent of all enrolled community fathers). Twenty-one percent participated in service contacts in the community and 14 percent participated in service contacts by phone. Reentering fathers most often participated in substantive service contacts in a setting designated as “other” (31 percent of all enrolled reentering fathers), which included (and was most likely) jails, prisons, and correctional facilities.

Referrals

RF grantees had large directories of agencies to which they could refer clients for additional services. On average, each RF grantee identified 122 service providers to which they could refer clients. Most grantees identified at least one agency in the community that could provide services in all relevant areas, including job and career planning, health and mental health support, education, and social services and emergency needs (Table 2).

Table 2. Grantees' referral sources

Services	Percentage of grantees that identified at least one service provider agency that offered the given services
Job and career planning	100
Health and mental health support	98
Education	95
Social services and emergency needs	95
Assessment	93
Child support, custody, and visitation	90
Domestic violence and intimate partner violence	83
Legal assistance referral	80
Family therapy and counseling referral	78
Parenting	73
Financial counseling	73
Child welfare services involvement	70
Healthy marriage and relationship education services	70
Youth services	65
Other services	90
Number of grantees	40

Source: nFORM data from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.

Note: Grantees could include agencies (1) that provided referrals to the program for potential clients, (2) to which the grantees referred clients for services, or (3) that provided services to grantees' clients as part of the RF grant.

However, clients did not receive many referrals from RF programs, on average. To meet client needs, grantees can provide clients with referrals to other agencies. All RF grantees provided at least some referrals. Community fathers received one referral, on average, whereas reentering fathers received 0.5 referrals on average. The most common types of referrals that clients received were the same for community and reentering fathers: (1) job and career advancement and (2) social services and emergency needs.

Incentives

Most RF clients did not receive any incentives.

With ACF's approval, grantees could provide clients with monetary or nonmonetary incentives. Among

community fathers, the most common purpose of incentives was to encourage program participation. For reentering fathers, incentives most commonly acknowledged reaching a specific program milestone (Figure 6).






RF grantees provided fewer than two incentives to each client on average. Community fathers received two incentives worth about \$62 on average (Figure 6). Reentering fathers received less than one incentive (0.2) on average that was worth about \$5 per client. However, the average for community fathers was skewed by one grantee that provided very large incentives—which sometimes exceeded \$4,000. Most RF clients did not receive any incentives. Slightly more than 50 percent of

community fathers and 92 percent of reentering fathers did not receive incentives (Figure 6).

Community fathers' incentives were most often to encourage program participation. In this population, 34 percent received such an incentive. For reentering fathers, the most common reason for incentives was reaching a program milestone—although, just 6 percent of all reentering fathers received such an incentive.

Gift cards (which 41 percent of enrolled clients received) and transportation assistance (16 percent) were the most common types of incentives that community fathers received. Among reentering fathers, 7 percent received incentives classified as “other” support and about 2 percent received gift cards.

Figure 6. Incentives for RF clients


	Community fathers	Reentering fathers
 Received an incentive	48%	8%
 Incentives per client, on average	2	0.2
 Mean amount	\$62	\$5
 Most common reason	Program participation	Program milestone
 Most common type	Gift card	Other support

Source: nFORM data from July 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019.


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