

# Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents

## PRESENTERS

DR. JEFFERY JOHNSON, National Partnership for Community Leadership

MS. MESHIA HENDERSON, Maximus Corporation





# **A NEW PARADIGM**

## **CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP WELLNESS**

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP WELLNESS

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A PARENTING ALLIANCE. The degree to which parents act as allies in child-rearing. Co-parenting wellness is about a division of child-rearing duties in a healthy cooperative relationship.



# WHY CO-PARENTING?

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- ❑ An analysis of over 100 studies on parent-child relationships found that having a loving and nurturing father was as important for a child's happiness, well-being, and social and academic success as having a loving and nurturing mother.





# WHAT IS CO-PARENTING?

**It IS NOT a competition!  
It IS a collaboration  
between parents  
(sometimes  
grandparents too),  
to do what is best for the  
child/ren.**



# MOTHERS MATTER!



Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship  
Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents

# WHAT IS CO-PARENTING?

**THE PARENTS' MORAL ECONOMY TO BE BUILT UPON IN RELATIONSHIP DISSOLUTION IS DOING WHAT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHILD. PROGRAMS FOCUSED ON CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS OFFER A "WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY."  
(Dr. Sara McClanahan, 2015)**



# FATHERS MATTER!



Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship  
Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents

A young child with short hair, wearing a plaid shirt, is smiling and holding hands with two adults. The adult on the left is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with thin black horizontal stripes. The adult on the right is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt. They are standing on a sandy beach with a blurred background of houses and trees under a bright sky.

# CO-PARENTING MATTERS

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health  
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# SHIFTING THE PARADIGM

**PARENTS OF  
HEALTHY START  
ELIGIBLE CHILDREN  
NEED INTERVENTION  
SERVICES THAT:**

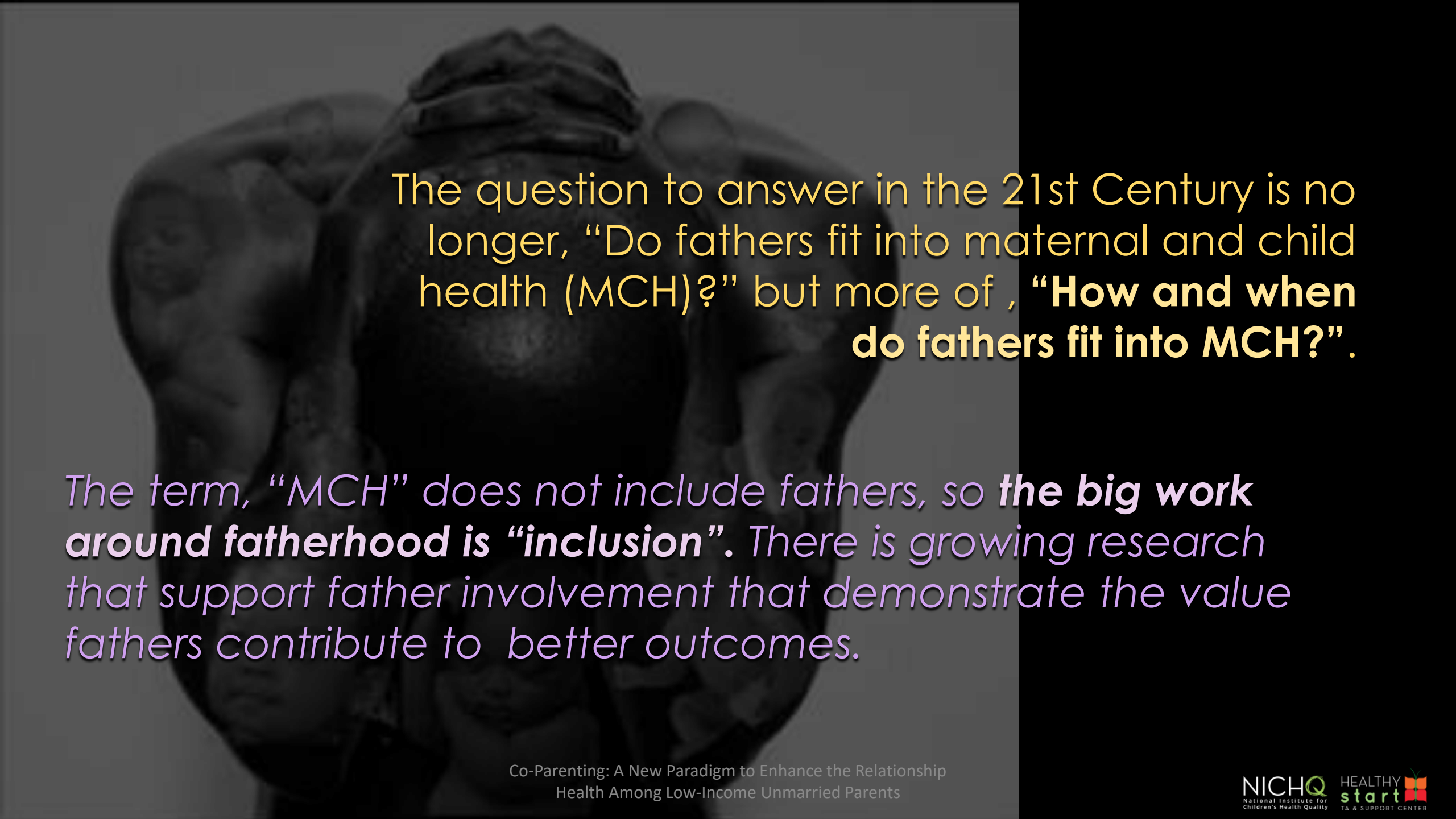
**FOCUS ON BOTH  
PARENTS**

**INCLUDES CO-PARENTING  
EDUCATION DURING THE PRE-NATAL  
PERIOD THAT EMPHASIZE HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPING  
CO-PARENTING AGREEMENTS**

**DEVELOP A SYSTEM OF CARE  
NETWORK THROUGH  
EXPANDED COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS INCLUDING  
CHILD SUPPORT AND  
EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

**EXPAND MISSION AND STAFF  
TO INCLUDE BOTH A  
FATHERHOOD COORDINATOR  
AND CO-PARENTING  
ENGAGEMENT  
COORDINATOR/CASE  
MANAGER**





The question to answer in the 21st Century is no longer, “Do fathers fit into maternal and child health (MCH)?” but more of , “**How and when do fathers fit into MCH?**”.

*The term, “MCH” does not include fathers, so **the big work around fatherhood is “inclusion”**. There is growing research that support father involvement that demonstrate the value fathers contribute to better outcomes.*

# building fatherhood



**Policy Regime #2**  
In the 1970s a conservative political/policy coalition



**Policy Regime #3**  
From the 1980's through the early 1990s, a political arm of the women's movement re-established the maternal system



**Policy Regime #4**  
From the late 1990s to the present, a fatherhood movement responded to the child support system's expanded obligations and sanctions



## Fatherhood Movement

1912

1935

1960

1970

1980

1990

2000

2010

2023



**Policy Regime #1**  
From the early 1900's through the late 1960s social workers expanded the child support system

**ADC**  
**1935**

**AFDC**  
**1962**

**1975**  
WIC was established

**1996**  
**TANF**



## 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fatherhood

**1950**  
The first federal legislation on private child support was enacted



**1975**  
The child support collection system officially launched in, which is when the government established Section IV-D of the Social Security Act

**1991**  
**ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) was created allowing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to merge the Office of Human Development Services with the Family Support Administration, along with the Maternal and Child

**1992**  
Public Law 102-521, the Child Support Recovery Act of 1992, imposed a Federal criminal penalty for the willful failure to pay a past due child support obligation

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fatherhood



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# FACTORS INFLUENCING RELATIONSHIP APPROACHES

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**FEDERAL POLICY AND RESEARCH  
STUDIES**

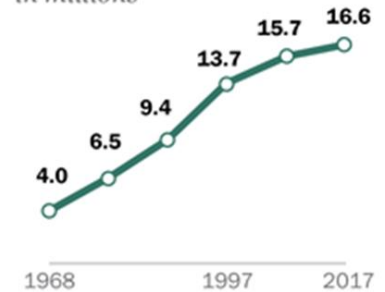


# KEY REASONS FOR HEALTHY START AND CO-PARENTING

- ❑ Over the past few decades, family structure has changed in Western society. As a result, a range of new family structures has emerged, including divorced families, cohabiting couples, same-sex couples, reconstituted families, unmarried parents, and a variety of other kinds of family systems. (Casares 2008, Hamilton 2010)
- ❑ Changes in family formation have resulted in the highest level of unmarried parents in our nation's history, a four-fold increase since 1968. There are different categories of unmarried parents, including cohabiting, divorced, or separated, and parents in non-romantic relationships. Forty percent of all U.S.-born children are born out of wedlock, including 75% of Black children, many of whom are poor and living in single-parent households.
- ❑ Culturally speaking, the term co-parenting is not well known or understood. The word co-parenting has its origins in married couples who separate or divorce. In communities with a high level of unmarried parents who never plan or intend to marry, co-parenting is not an expression or term used or something talked about generally.
- ❑ The services we provide to unmarried fathers and mothers should be expanded to include an emphasis on co-parenting, educating them on what it means, how to plan co-parenting agreements, and its benefits to children from birth and beyond.

## Since 1968, a fourfold increase in the number of unmarried parents

*All unmarried U.S. parents, in millions*



Note: "Parents" are all U.S. parents living with at least one child younger than 18.  
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey March Supplement (IPUMS).  
"The Changing Profile of Unmarried Parents"

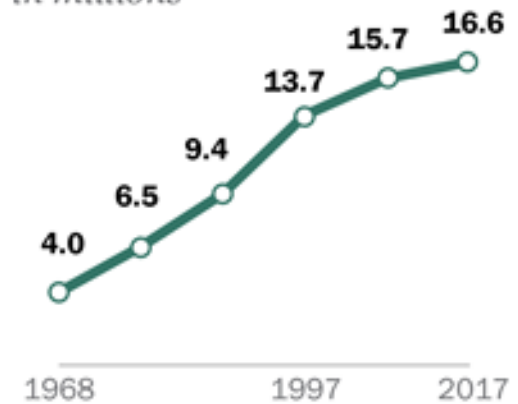
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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# KEY REASONS FOR HEALTHY START AND CO- PARENTING

- ❑ Healthy Start services to mothers include prenatal and post-natal support. **Parenting and relationship education classes nor peer support groups are offered as an option for mothers.**



# KEY REASONS FOR HEALTHY START AND CO-PARENTING

❑ Research indicates that father involvement has a positive impact on the health outcomes of children. Specifically, involved fathers are linked to better results on nearly every measure of child well-being, from cognitive development and educational achievement to self-esteem and prosocial behavior. Providing services and programming to increase fathers' positive parenting skills, appropriate discipline, effective communication, emotional support, and stress management can have the double effect of reducing child abuse and increasing protective factors. As a result, not only can children face a reduced risk of maltreatment, but they can also benefit from positive father involvement.

❑ Mothers are 1.5 times more likely to receive prenatal care in the first trimester when a father is involved, which has positive implications for maternal and infant health. Including dads will inevitably make it easier for moms during the prenatal period and beyond to keep the child healthy at birth and beyond.



# MDRC RESEARCH ON FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY POLICY AND PROGRAMS A DECADE AGO

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Income Unmarried Parents

# CO-PARENTING POLICY PERSPECTIVES

**Public policy has long been aimed at reducing disparities by improving opportunities for disadvantaged parents and their children.**



# CO-PARENTING POLICY PERSPECTIVES

Children's development benefits when parents have a long-term, supportive, low-conflict relationship. Therefore, strengthening the quality of the relationships between parents is an important goal.....



# CO-PARENTING POLICY PERSPECTIVES

**New investments in policies and programs should be based on the best current evidence about how family's function, what children need, and what works to improve outcomes for low-income families and children. This includes acknowledging and attending to complexities such as multi-partner fertility and blended families, as well as continuing to build knowledge about which interventions are most effective in improving outcomes for children.**



# **CO-PARENTING POLICY PERSPECTIVES**

**Whether parents live together or not, most children are likely to benefit from having a relationship with both parents....**



1

**Relationship skills approaches have shown benefits for couples/parents' relationship quality, co-parenting skills, fathers' engagement in parenting, and children's well-being.**



2

**Parents' relationships should be a fundamental consideration in future programs to increase low-income fathers' engagement with their children.**



3

**Whether parents live together or not, most children are likely to benefit from having a relationship with their parents.**



# The Value of Shared Parenting

In 54 studies of shared parenting—absent situations in which children needed protection from an abusive or negligent parent even before their parents separated—children in shared-parenting families had better outcomes than children in sole physical custody families. The measures of well-being included: academic achievement, emotional health (anxiety, depression, self-esteem, life satisfaction), behavioral problems (delinquency, school misbehavior, bullying, drugs, alcohol, smoking), physical health and stress-related illnesses, and relationships with parents, stepparents, and grandparents.

*Dr. Linda Nielsen is a professor of Adolescent and Educational Psychology at Wake Forest University.*

# A NEW PARADIGM SHIFT TO CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP WELLNESS IN HEALTHY START

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**EXPANDING SERVICES TO INCLUDE CASE MANAGEMENT,  
PEER SUPPORT GROUPS FOR MOTHERS, SERVICES TO  
FATHERS, AND CO-PARENTING EDUCATION**



# THE EMERGING EVIDENCE OF PROMISE

**PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR MOTHERS**





Richmond Family &  
Fatherhood Initiative

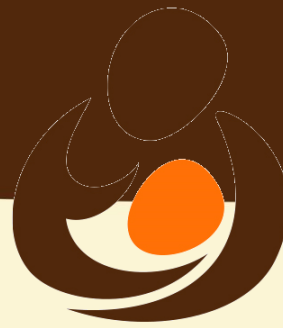


# Motherhood & Co-parenting Initiative

Sponsored by: Richmond Family and Fatherhood Initiative



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# Motherhood Group





## Lessons Learned: Dispelling Myths & Stereotypes of Single Mothers

- Most women do want the father of their children in their lives but are not emotionally healed due to the failure of the relationship or their past mistakes.
- Most women only want to protect their children from the past emotional hurt of fathers not honoring their promises.
- There is a link between the mother getting over her own personal hurts to not having her own father engaged.



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# Lessons Learned: Program Implementation

## Facilitators

- Key Points for Facilitators:
  - Be flexible
  - Cognizant of time
  - Compassionate but mission driven
- Have community resources on hand (i.e. community resource handbook and/or database)
- Keep Curriculum/ Program fidelity but be mindful of the type partner and environment (i.e. Rubicon and City Justice Center)
- Build solid connections with community resources
  - Ways to Work
  - Licensed Clinical Social Worker/ Counselor



# Motherhood Alumni

## *Email from An Alumni*

- Ms. Gregory, and other co-facilitators,
- I wanted to take a moment to let you know the impact that the Motherhood Group had on me and my family. **When I joined**, I had been **separated** from my husband for approximately **4** years and was pretty much set on getting a **divorce**. I saw the advertisement on the local news and thought this would be an awesome support for me as I make the transition to single mothering "for real".
- I really believe that this group was a great support for me, as it provided a place to come and feel normal as I started to transition into the role of being a single mother. It allowed me to process my grief, loss, and overall feelings of bitterness and anger; therefore, I was able to be a productive **co-parent** for my son with his father. I can honestly say I really worked hard to support their connection and to work with his father rather than against him. I used the things I learned in the group to continue that journey.



# Motherhood Alumni

## Email from An Alumni Continued

My husband and I recently decided to **reconcile** our marriage and I believe having a place to come and feel connected and supported contributed to this unfolding for us. Our separation and raising our son didn't become a battle ground, but instead we were able to see parenting of our son as a place to work together and gain some successes that have now trickled into our marriage.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. This group impacted my family tree and for that I am grateful and hopeful!

Sincerely,

N.K







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# THE EMERGING EVIDENCE OF PROMISE

## CO-PARENTING PROGRAMS

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# The Promise in Practice

Co-Parenting Program  
Emerging Evidence

# Focus Group - Voices of Dads

A recent focus group of fathers in Memphis, Tennessee revealed that while fathers want better career opportunities and earning capacity, they also want:

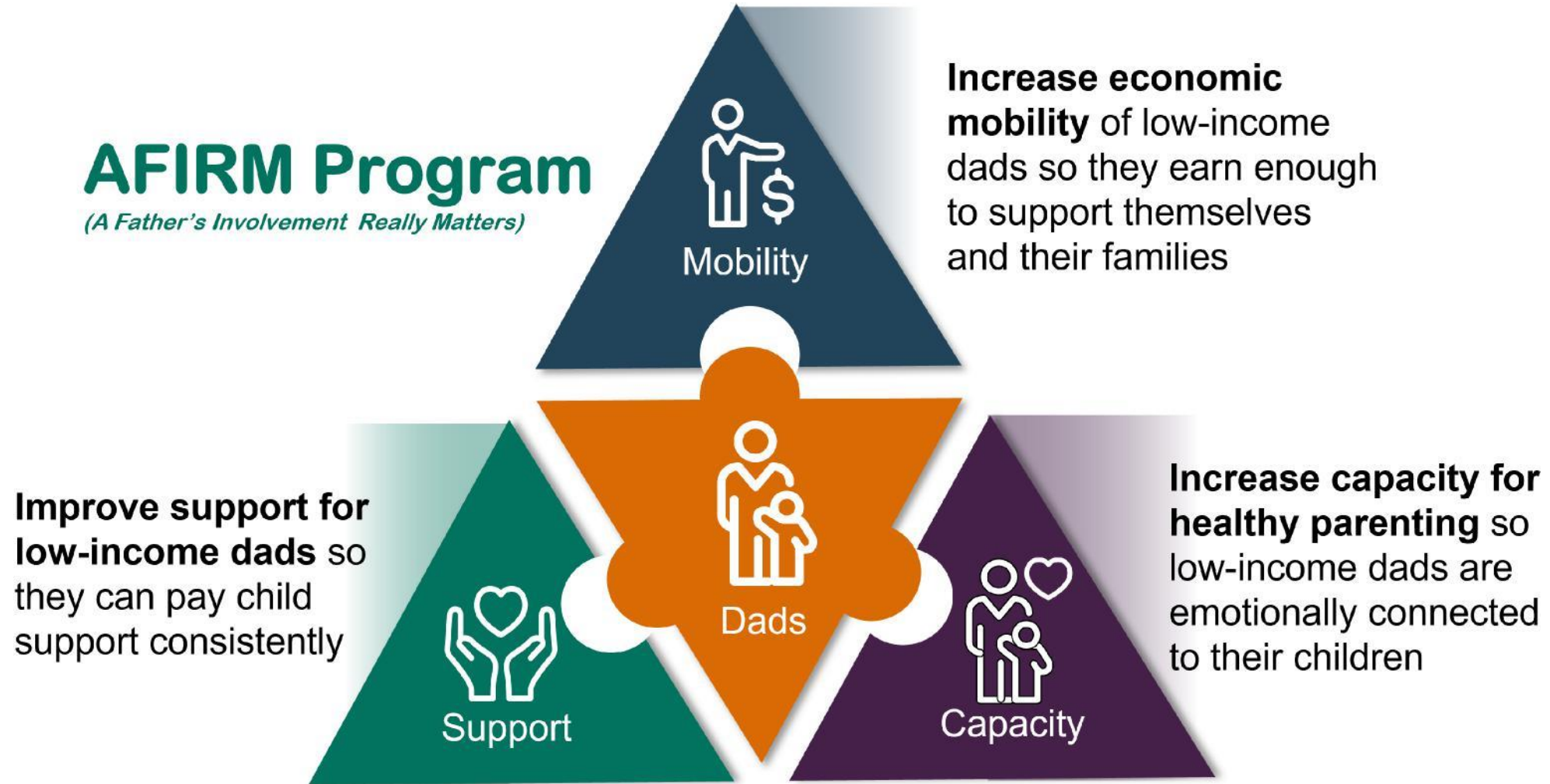
- Support for knowing **how to co-parent** and be a better father
- They felt **services dedicated to their needs were missing**, and
- Services could also **focus on their success as fathers and co-parents**, not just those aimed at their financial contribution through child support
- Voice of the father:
  - “A course for mothers and fathers would be good to **learn how to co-parent together**”
  - “I would be interested in being a **better communicator**”
  - I would like **better parenting tools** to help me be a better parent”
  - “**Learning Mediation** would be good to learn about in this program”



# Three Service Pillars

## AFIRM Program

*(A Father's Involvement Really Matters)*





# The Populations, Vision, Value Proposition and Problem



## Population

- Low-income dads 18-40 in Memphis/Shelby County
- Connected to TANF family
- Prospective or recent child support order



- **Vision** – Permanently transform the way that low-income fathers are viewed and served by safety net/social programs
- **Value Proposition** – Build capacity to reduce dependency; invest in low-income fathers to change the trajectory of their children's lives, while also creating safety net savings

***A Father's Involvement Really Matters (AFIRM)***



## Problem – 4 Interconnected Issues:

- **Earnings Capacity** – chronic un/underemployment and limited education yields less ability to provide financially
- **Fear of Child Support System** – fear of unpayable child support orders leads fathers to avoid the formal system
- **Safety Net Not Structured for Fathers** – most service interventions focused on needs of mothers (TANF, SNAP)
- **Father's Impact Under Valued** – kids do better with involved fathers; services often prioritize only financial support

# Collaborative Partners and their Roles

***Relationships, Capacity, and Experience** – our team brings specialized strengths to create a service model infrastructure primed for success*

## Families Matter

### Lead organization

- Bringing relationships, trust, and credibility w/in Memphis community
- Project Headquarters
- Integrated staff with Maximus
- Experienced in serving target population
- Existing fatherhood workshops



## Maximus

### Delivery Partner

- Integrated staff with Families Matter
- Employment and Skill Building Services
- Performance Management – QA and Reporting
- Road tested operational best practices
- Child Support connection

MAXIMUS

## Nat'l Experts

### Best Practice Fatherhood Operations Advising

- Fidelity to service model; tangible ideas and concrete methods to apply
- Curriculum and training
- Advising on best practices – workflow, SOPs, applying lessons learned from nat'l demonstrations
- Support for sustainability planning



## Community Network

### Community of Care Network

- Satellite locations for our project – all w/in 5 miles
- Service extension – warm-hand off liaison to connect with resources and supports
- Specialized services the core collaborative may not provide



# AFIRM's Program Activity

## Community Outreach

- Developing Community Partnerships
- Strong Presence in the Community



## Referrals Received

- Child Support
- Community Based Organizations
- Community Outreach and Engagement
- Government Partners

# Moving Toward the Promise of Success!



- March – July 2023, the project averaged 25 enrollments per month
- In August 2023 we began outreach to barber shops and TCAT education facilities. We initiated “Boots to the Ground” recruitment efforts throughout the city.
- Since the implementation of this initiative, the program has had a 98.7% increase in enrollments through October 2023.
- August 2023 there were 42 enrollments with 22 coming from Community Outreach. This was a 68% increase for August 2023 in comparison to the start of the contract through July 2023.
- October 2023, produced 73 enrollments to end year 1 with a total of 274 enrollments. This was a 154% increase for October 2023 in comparison to the start of the contract through the end of September 2023 and an increase of 114.7% in comparison to September 2023.
- 21 enrollments from government partners with 14 of the 21 coming from the Shelby County Juvenile Courts.



# AFIRM Engagement Results

Month	Referred	Scheduled for Orientation	Enrolled	% of Referred scheduled for orientation	% of Orientations enrolled
3/1/2023 starting 2/1/23	434	76	22	18%	29%
Apr-23	363	61	31	17%	51%
May-23	477	62	28	13%	45%
Jun-23	478	53	23	11%	43%
Jul-23	566	66	21	12%	32%
Aug-23	657	95	42	14%	44%
Sep-23	1749	112	34	6%	30%
Oct-23	455	159	73	35%	46%
Total	5179	684	274	13%	40%
Average	647.4	85.5	34	16%	40%

# Fatherhood Co-Parenting Classes

**36 Fathers have Officially  
Graduated from the  
Fatherhood Co-Parenting  
Classes**



**13 AFIRM Father's have  
signed Co-Parenting  
Agreements**



## **Participants Demographics**

Hispanic – 2  
American Indian -1  
Caucasian – 1  
Other – 4  
African American - 247



## **Next Graduation**

December 6, 2023

38 – Currently Enrolled in Class  
4 – Expected to Complete in 2 Wks.  
11 – Expected to Complete in 30 days.

# Fatherhood Co-Parenting Classes



- **38% of graduates that completed fatherhood training have signed a co-parenting agreement**
- Fathers are randomly assigned to Group-A benefits from an eight (8) Week Fatherhood workshop. The Workshops covers a series of skill-building topics for making good dads even better dads.
- Fathers assigned to Group-B cannot participate in the eight (8) week training but receive employment and training services.
- When possible, fathers can also co-enroll with their child's mother in a workshop called *Relationship Skills for Strong Families*.
- This Classes focus on healthy Co-Parenting. Parents work together to create a Parenting Agreement that cements what they have learned and received through the workshop.
- Both workshops include key milestones and a Graduation Celebration.



# Co-Parenting Agreement Example #1

## Co-Parenting Agreement Form

At its core, a co-parenting agreement involves planning. The prospects for a high-functioning co-parenting relationship are increased when parents have made high-functioning plans to succeed.

### 1. Plan to Communicate

We agree to keep communications between us open by:

- ☒ Telephone
- ☒ Video conferencing
- ☒ Texting
- ☒ Email
- ☒ Mail
- ☒ Regular parental meeting at the following times: 2:30 pm & 6:00 pm
- ☒ Joint calendar
- ☒ Parenting notebook

### 2. Plan to Support Each Other

We plan to support the other parent by (check all that you can agree to):

- ☒ Leaving our child(ren) out of adult discussions about our Co-Parenting Agreement and all other aspects of our separation/relationship.
- ☒ Not discussing the other parent in a negative way in the presence of our child(ren).
- ☒ Discouraging others from discussing the other parent in a negative way in the presence of our child(ren).
- ☒ Communicating directly with one another. We will not ask our child(ren) to be a messenger (i.e., "tell the other parent this for me") or a spy (i.e., "tell me what the other parent is doing").
- ☒ Maintaining consistent expectations and routines for our child(ren) (e.g., homework, curfew, bedtime, discipline, television, computer or phone restrictions, and chores).

### 3. Plan to Educate Your Child

Major decisions about our child(ren)'s education will be made by:

Both parents ☒ \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

We also agree:

- To share our child(ren)'s school information (e.g., school evaluations) with one another.
- To encourage and support our child(ren)'s educational efforts at home by:
  - ☒ Making sure our child(ren) gets to school unless sick.
  - ☒ Making sure homework is done.
  - ☒ Helping with homework as needed.
  - ☒ Attending school conferences and events for parents.
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- To encourage and support our child's extracurricular activities.

### 4. Plan Your Child's Religion and Culture

We agree that major decisions about religion and culture about our child will be made by:

Both parents ☒ \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Plan Your Child's Medical Care

We agree that major decisions about our child's medical care will be made by:

Both parents ☒ \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Plan Your Child's Daily Care

We agree that major decisions about our child's daily care and parenting will be made by:

Both parents ☒ \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. Plan Your Child's Safe Travel

We agree that major decisions about our child's Transportation will be made by:

Both parents ☒ \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

We will help our child gather the things they will need to take to the other parent's home and/or school.

We will arrange transportation as follows: \_\_\_\_\_

"Off duty" parent picks up/drops off at (time) \_\_\_\_\_ and (place) \_\_\_\_\_

"On duty" parent picks up/drops off at (time) \_\_\_\_\_ and (place) \_\_\_\_\_

We understand that when we present this recommendation to the proper authorities, they will accept this voluntary co-parenting agreement unless they determine that another arrangement is necessary for the best interests of our child.

We understand that we may voluntarily agree to changes to this Co-parenting agreement as our child(ren) develop and circumstances change. However, we understand that changes to this Co-parenting agreement might need to be confirmed by an order of the court to be enforceable. We

understand that if we are unable to agree to changes, this existing Co-parenting agreement will remain in effect until a revised plan is approved.

Date: 7/12/23

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 7/12/23

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

# Co-Parenting Agreement Example #2



State TN  
County of Shelby  
Date 10/2/2023  
Mother's ID Verified ✓ TDP

## CO-PARENTING AGREEMENT

1. Parents: This plan is for the child/children of:

Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

2. Children: The minor child(ren) of this relationship are as follows:

Name	Sex (M/F)	DOB
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Page 1



3. Physical Custody for the purpose of this agreement refers to the child's primary residence where routine day-to-day decisions are made regarding the child(ren's) well-being.  
The child resides with both parents at the above listed residence.

### A. Parenting Time and Visitation

The non-custodial parent will have visitation with the child as follows:

Child resides w/ both parents. Mom has custody. [redacted] is with child.

Transportation for safe travel will involve:

Both Parents Mr. [redacted] Ms. [redacted]  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other [redacted]

### B. Communication

We agree to keep communication open between us by means of:

- Telephone
- Video Conferencing (Facetime/Google Meet, etc.)
- Texting
- Regular parental meeting at the following times:

Day(s)	Time(s)	Comments
<u>Daily</u>		<u>Making decisions on handling of situations</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Page 2



### C. Education

Major decisions regarding our child(ren's) education will be made by:

Both Parents Mr. [redacted] Ms. [redacted]  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

We also agree:

- ✓ To share child(ren's) school information (grades, evaluations, disciplinary needs)

School conferences and events will be attended by:

Both Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Ms. [redacted]  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

### C. Child's Activities

To encourage and support our child(ren's) extracurricular activities, these events will be attended by:

Both Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent \_\_\_\_\_  
Other None @ the moment

### D. Religion and Culture

Major decisions regarding religion and culture about our child(ren) will be made by:

Both Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Ms. [redacted]  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

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# Example #2 Cont'd



## E. Medical Care

Major decisions regarding the child(ren)'s medical or emergency care will be made by:

Both Parents \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Ms. [Redacted] \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Additionally, for the well-being of our child(ren), we plan to support the other parent by:

- Leaving our child(ren) out of adult discussions about our Co-Parenting Agreement and all other aspects of our relationship.  
Yes ☒ No ☐
- Not negatively discussing the other parent in the presence of our child(ren).  
Yes ☒ No ☐
- Discouraging others from negatively discussing the other parent in the presence of our child(ren).  
Yes ☒ No ☐
- We will communicate directly with one another. We will not ask our child(ren) to be a messenger or reporter of the other parent's doings.  
Yes ☒ No ☐
- We will maintain consistent expectations and routines for our child(ren)'s well-being such as homework, curfew, television, bedtime, computer and phone restrictions, and chores.  
Yes ☒ No ☐

Father (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Father (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Mother (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (Signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Witness (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

10-02-23  
Date

10-2-23  
Date

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Additional Comments

None

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Page 5

# FAMILIES MATTER, INC.

Presents

# AFIRM

A FATHER'S INVOLVEMENT REALLY MATTERS

## Faces of Fathers



## Connecting with Dads



## Family Support for Graduates





# Milestone Payments



		Documentation Needed from Participant	Payment Amount	
			Group A	Group B
	Completion of the Fatherhood & Coparenting Curriculum Training	Recognition and certificate of completion of the 8-week training course	\$500	
	Establish a Co-Parenting Agreement	Signed agreement from both parents for each established child support case	\$800	
	Complete Credential/Certification Training	Training Class Certificate on letterhead from the school where the credential was obtained	\$500	\$500
	Job Placement (30 Day Retention)	Completed employment verification form, paycheck stubs, and/or The Work number	\$200	\$200
	Job Retention (60 and 120 Retention)	Completed employment verification form, paycheck stubs, and/or The Work Number	\$300	\$300
	Complete On the Job and Upskills Training	Acknowledgement from the Employer that a required or specific set of upskills has been obtained to increase the opportunity for career advancement	\$300	\$300



# **CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIP WELLNESS THE WAY FORWARD**

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Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship  
Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS ARE COMPLICATED



Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship  
Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents

# Co-Parenting Education Implementation Model



Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship  
Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# THE GOAL THE NPCL CO-PARENTING CURRICULUM

## FATHERS

- ✓ Understanding the benefits of his involvement in his child's health, academic, and relationship success.
- ✓ Understanding of the importance of healthy co-parenting.
- ✓ Having a receptive attitude about healthy co-parenting.
- ✓ A willingness to engage in a healthy co-parenting relationship.
- ✓ Agree to share in parental duties and responsibilities.
- ✓ Establish Legal Paternity.
- ✓ Get a high school diploma and more.
- ✓ Obtain Legal Employment
- ✓ Pay child support\*
- ✓ Put forth his best effort to act in the best ways he can to support the mother to feel and be successful.
- ✓ Support Your Child Bill of Rights

\*Fathers who have regular access and visitation to their child are more likely to pay their child support.

## MOTHERS

- ✓ Understanding the benefits of father involvement in her child's health, academic, and relationship success.
- ✓ Understanding of the importance of healthy co-parenting.
- ✓ Having a receptive attitude about healthy co-parenting.
- ✓ A willingness to engage in a healthy co-parenting relationship.
- ✓ Agree to share in parental duties and responsibilities.
- ✓ Agree on child support.
- ✓ Agree on visitation and access (goal)
- ✓ Get a high school diploma and more.
- ✓ Obtain a job to help support the child, when appropriate.
- ✓ Put forth her best effort to act in the best ways she can to support the father to feel and be successful.
- ✓ Support Your Child Bill of Rights.

# Co-Parenting Curriculum Knowledge and Attitude Assessment Tools

The Co-Parenting Curriculum Knowledge and Attitude Assessment Tools is administered as a Pre and Post Test to program participants completing Curriculum workshops. We look at three categories for the Knowledge and Attitude Assessment. They are as follows:

**Care = Acceptance of Parenting Responsibility**

**Legal = Understanding the legal process and how it deals with child custody disputes in a divorce or when the romantic relationship ends**

**Social = What are the socialized roles of fathers and mothers**



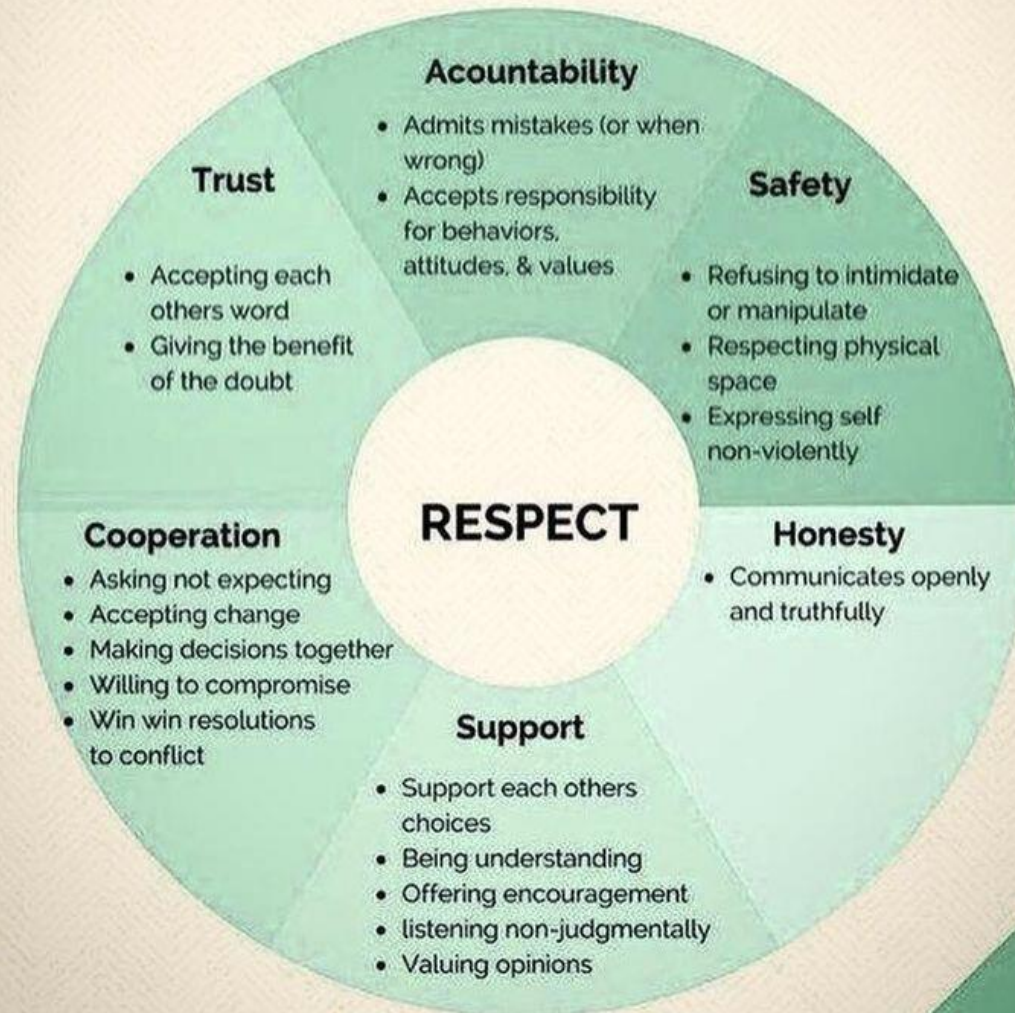
# *Developing Healthy Co-Parenting Relationships.*



Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health  
Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# Healthy Relationships





# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATION

**We have to understand,  
*“What we’re doing,” “Why  
we’re doing what we do,”  
and “How it impacts those  
who we are doing it for”***

***Dr. Herb Turner, President  
of Analytica Inc.***

**The field of fatherhood programming rests on a cornerstone that is defined as our ability to evaluate what we've done. Any fatherhood program, irrespective of its size and scope, should be evaluable.**

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# **MEASURES OF IMPROVEMENT IN CO-PARENTING RELATIONSHIPS**

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship  
Health Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents

# CAN/DO FEDERALLY SUPPORTED FATHERHOOD AND MARRIAGE PROGRAMS WORK?

Seth Chamberlain, Division Director, Family and Economic Stability Demonstration and Innovation Division (IFC 2023)

There have many federally supported evaluations on HMRP ...

Some show impacts

Some show limited impacts, e.g.:

- Only short-term effects (e.g. 3-mo impacts)**

- Only small effect sizes**

- No impacts beyond the adults, i.e. no impacts on children**

Some show null impacts

**What do you do with mixed evidence?**

**Provide the best programming possible, based on the evidence that exists**





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**Before parents can improve their co-parenting relationship, they need to determine**

- Which type of co-parental relationship they have (Parallel, Conflict, Cooperative)
- Which type they want, and
- Which type is possible for their situation.

While **cooperative co-parenting** is the gold standard, oftentimes **it is not possible or recommended** for many reasons. **Perhaps because one or more of the parents is not interested in or able to change how they interact or there is active substance abuse, domestic violence, long-term estrangement, or potential conflict with a new romantic partner—just to name a few examples.**

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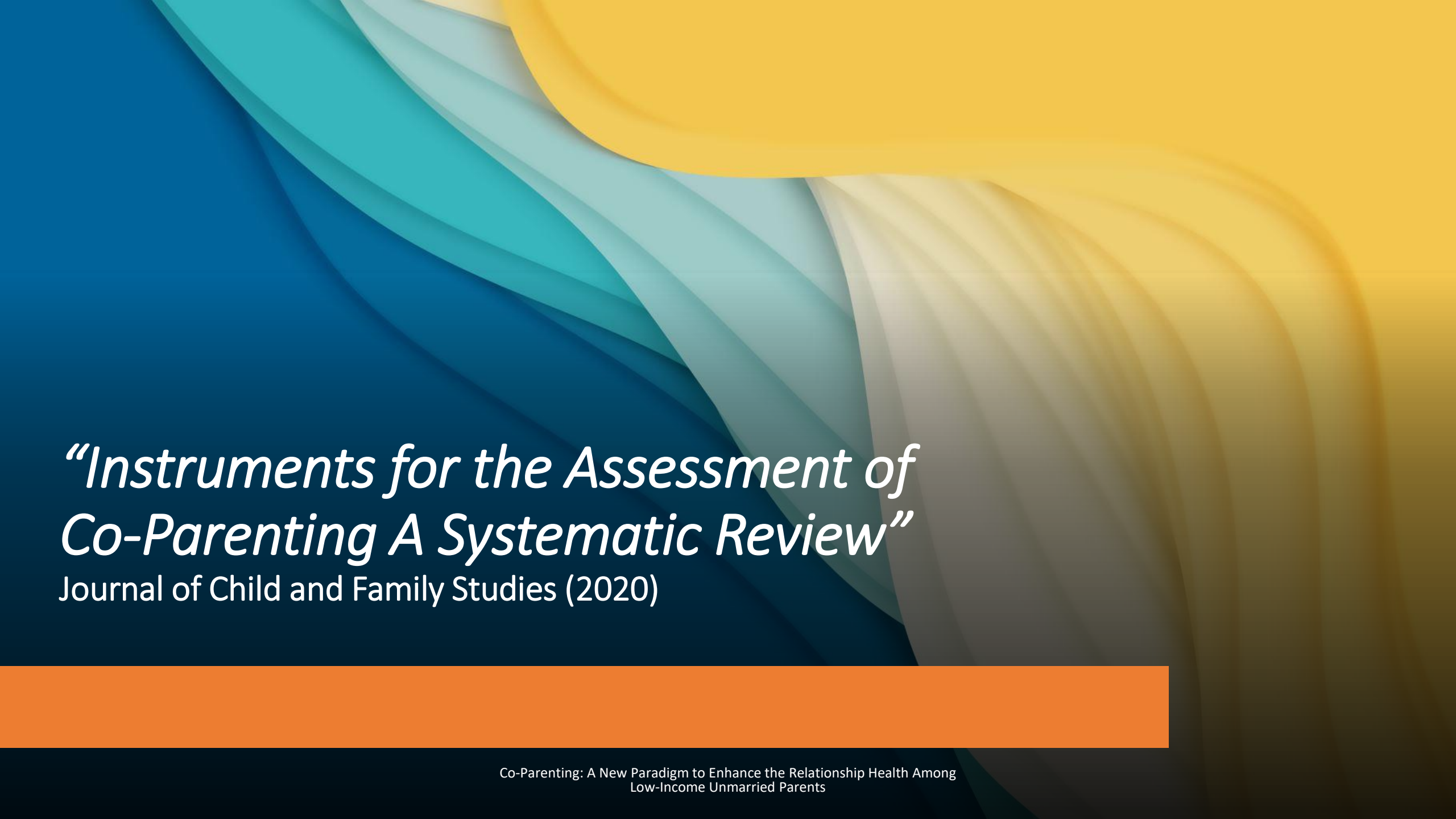
**Whatever the current co-parenting style, there is usually room for improvement, and participating in co-parenting education programs is one way in which co-parents can work toward**

- 1. Improved communication,**
- 2. Lower-Levels of conflict, and**
- 3. The development of healthier ways and means to interact in order to reduce the negative effects on their children.**



# FIELD TESTED EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS TO ASSESS CO-PARENTING PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health Among  
Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# *“Instruments for the Assessment of Co-Parenting A Systematic Review”*

Journal of Child and Family Studies (2020)





## Instruments for the Assessment of Coparenting: A Systematic Review

Laia Mollà Cusí<sup>1,2,3</sup> · Cristina Günther-Bel<sup>2</sup> · Anna Vilaregut Puigdesens<sup>2</sup> · Meritxell Campreciós Orriols<sup>2</sup> · Josep Lluís Matalí Costa<sup>1,3</sup>

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### Abstract

In light of the increasing variability in family structures, coparenting has attracted growing attention as a crucial dimension on which to evaluate children's mental health across different family structures. In this study, we present a systematic review of the available measures for the assessment of coparenting. After duplicate removal, screening, and eligibility assessment, 26 instruments were selected. Due to the importance of the coparental relationship to children's mental health, special attention was paid to the characteristics that contribute to enhancing the instruments' suitability for use in clinical contexts. The results show a great increase in the number of published instruments designed to assess coparenting. The review also found some instruments to be more suitable than others for use in clinical contexts due to their time-efficiency, their psychometric properties and/or to other dimensions. This review reinforces the importance of developing instruments that allow for the assessment of coparenting and contributes to the body of knowledge in the field by offering information of interest to professionals dealing with families.

**Keywords** Coparenting · Assessment · Systematic review · Co-parenting · Measurement · Psychometrics

### Highlights

- Coparenting should be assessed as an important factor regarding children's mental health.
- There is a need for instruments that assess coparenting across family structures.
- Coparenting should be evaluated with other family relationships.

Family structure encompasses a number of different systems. The parent-child subsystem constitutes the parenting relationship within a given family. This system is dyadic, and it includes the individual relationships of each parent with the child. Meanwhile, the parent subsystem also plays a central role in regulating family interplay (Minuchin 1974). This subsystem is defined by the interactions between the two parental figures, and consists of two main relationships: the marital relationship (the couple's way of

relating to one another) and the coparenting relationship (the parental interactions involved in caring for and ensuring the well-being of their children) (Margolin et al. 2001).

Previous researchers have variously conceptualized coparenting either as a triadic relationship or as a dyadic construct with a triadic manifestation. The concept's role as a mediating factor between individual parenting and the marital relationship has also been discussed in the literature. Coparenting is specifically connected to the collaboration between the two parents with regard to childrearing (Feinberg 2003; Lamela and Figueiredo 2016). In other words, the term coparenting refers to horizontal interactions between the two parents, while the word parenting describes the vertical interplay between a given parent and his or her child (Lamela and Figueiredo 2016).

Although there is no single, uncontested theory of coparenting, a number of scholars have posed comprehensive theories of the concept. For example, Feinberg and Sakuma (2011) described four overlapping constructs that summarize the domains described by researchers: agreement

✉ Laia Mollà Cusí  
lmollac@sjdhospitalbarcelona.org

<sup>1</sup> Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychology Department of Hospital Sant Joan de Déu, Barcelona, Spain

<sup>2</sup> Department of Psychology, FPCEE Blanquerna, Universitat Ramon Llull, Barcelona, Spain

<sup>3</sup> Children and Adolescent Mental Health Research Group, Institut de Recerca Sant Joan de Déu, Barcelona, Spain

# The Highlights of the Co-Parenting Systematic Review

Co-parenting should be assessed as an important factor regarding children's mental health.

There is a need for instruments that assess co-parenting across family structures.

Co-parenting should be evaluated with other family relationships.

- 
- Research has shown that children can attain favorable outcomes within different family structures. What matters most is the effectiveness of family processes and the quality of relationships within a family (Walsh, 2006). Studies have found evidence of relationships between co-parenting dynamics and both parental adjustment and parenting quality (Feinberg et al., 2012). For instance, a weak co-parenting alliance has been linked to more significant stress in resident fathers (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010). Conversely, a strong parenting alliance has been linked to better and warmer parenting quality and greater self-efficacy in mothers and fathers from various racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, all with children between two and seven years of age. (Abidin & Brunner, 1995).

....This study is a **systematic review of the available measures for the assessment of co-parenting.** **After duplicate removal, screening, and eligibility assessment, 26 instruments were selected.** Due to the importance of the co-parental relationship to children's mental health, special attention was paid to the characteristics that contribute to enhancing the instruments' suitability for use in clinical contexts. **The results show a great increase in the number of published instruments designed to assess co-parenting. The review also found some instruments to be more suitable than others for use in clinical contexts due to their time-efficiency, their psychometric properties and/or to other dimensions.** This review reinforces the importance of developing instruments that allow for the assessment of co-parenting and contributes to the body of knowledge in the field by offering information of interest to professionals dealing with families.

**Keywords** Coparenting • Assessment • Systematic review • Co-parenting • Measurement • Psychometrics



## Parental Collaboration Questionnaire

The Parenting Alliance Measure (PAM, Konold and Abidin 2001)

(recommended) is to estimate the perceived characteristics of the parenting alliance, defined here as the degree to which parents act as allies in child rearing. Elsewhere, the parenting alliance has been defined as the part of the marital relationship related to parenting and child rearing (Weissman and Cohen 1985).....

*SOURCE: Instruments for the Assessment of Co-Parenting: A Systematic Review. Journal of Child and Family Studies 2020*



# NEW PARADIGM AND NEW PARTNERS

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health  
Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents



# IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health  
Among Low-Income Unmarried Parents






**To address the needs of low-skilled, low-income mothers and fathers, it is inefficient, impractical and, at worst, impossible to do it all with ‘lone ranger’ case managers and a ‘lone ranger’ program. You are going to need partners.**

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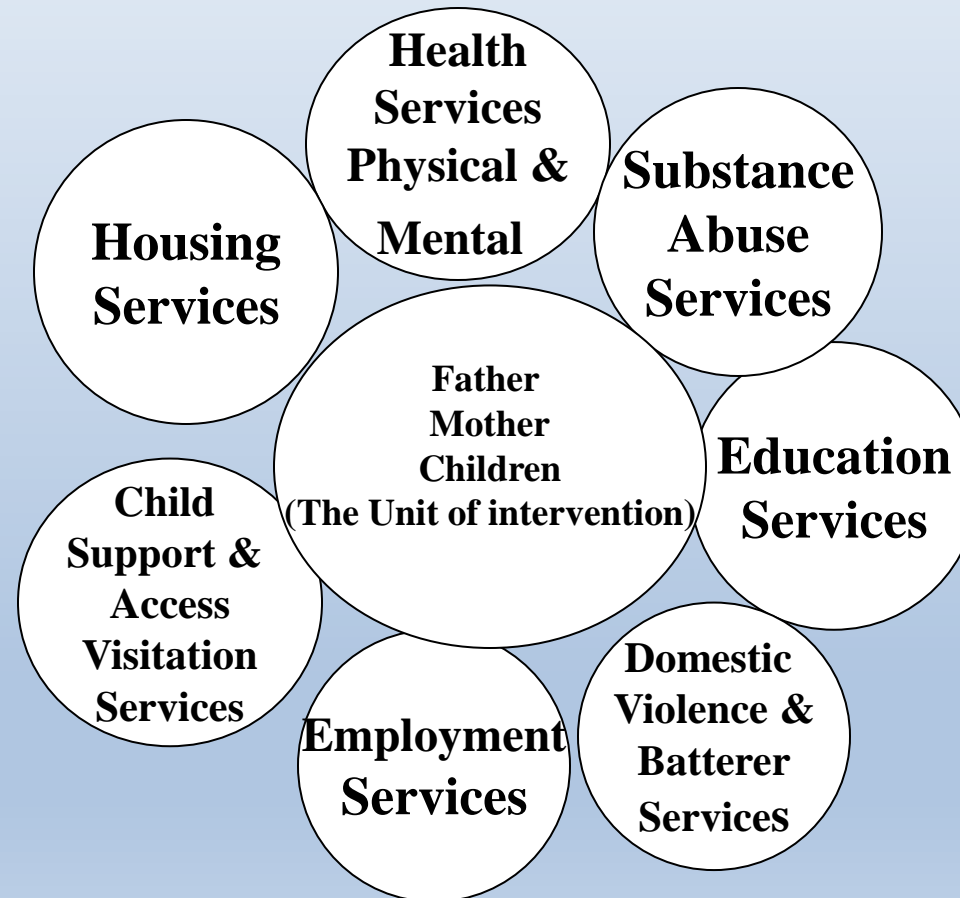


A large, colorful puzzle is the central focus, with several pieces missing. The puzzle is composed of various colored pieces: blue, green, red, and orange. Two stylized, 3D figures are positioned around the puzzle. On the left, a blue figure is holding a large blue puzzle piece. On the right, a green figure is holding a large green puzzle piece. The background is a solid gray color.

Cooperating with community partners enables programs to offer a broader array of services. No single program can meet the multiple needs of mothers and fathers or offer them a full range of opportunities to show what they have to give to their communities. Partnerships also allow programs to serve as brokers for mothers and fathers, linking them with services and resources they need and other parents who need them.

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# SYSTEM OF CARE FRAMEWORK FOR FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS SERVING LOW-INCOME NON-CUSTODIAL FATHERS



## What were some of the critical cornerstone lessons that will help community-based organizations implement effective co-parenting programs?

Research and  
Planning

Professional  
Development

Selecting An  
Evidenced  
Informed  
Curriculum

Meeting Mothers  
and Fathers where  
they are

Understanding the  
Father/Mother  
Relationship

Documentation  
and Case  
Management

Building An  
Evidence-Base

Developing A Logic  
Model

Facilitation Skills

Fidelity of  
Implementation

Community  
Partnerships

Implementing A  
System of Care

PAST



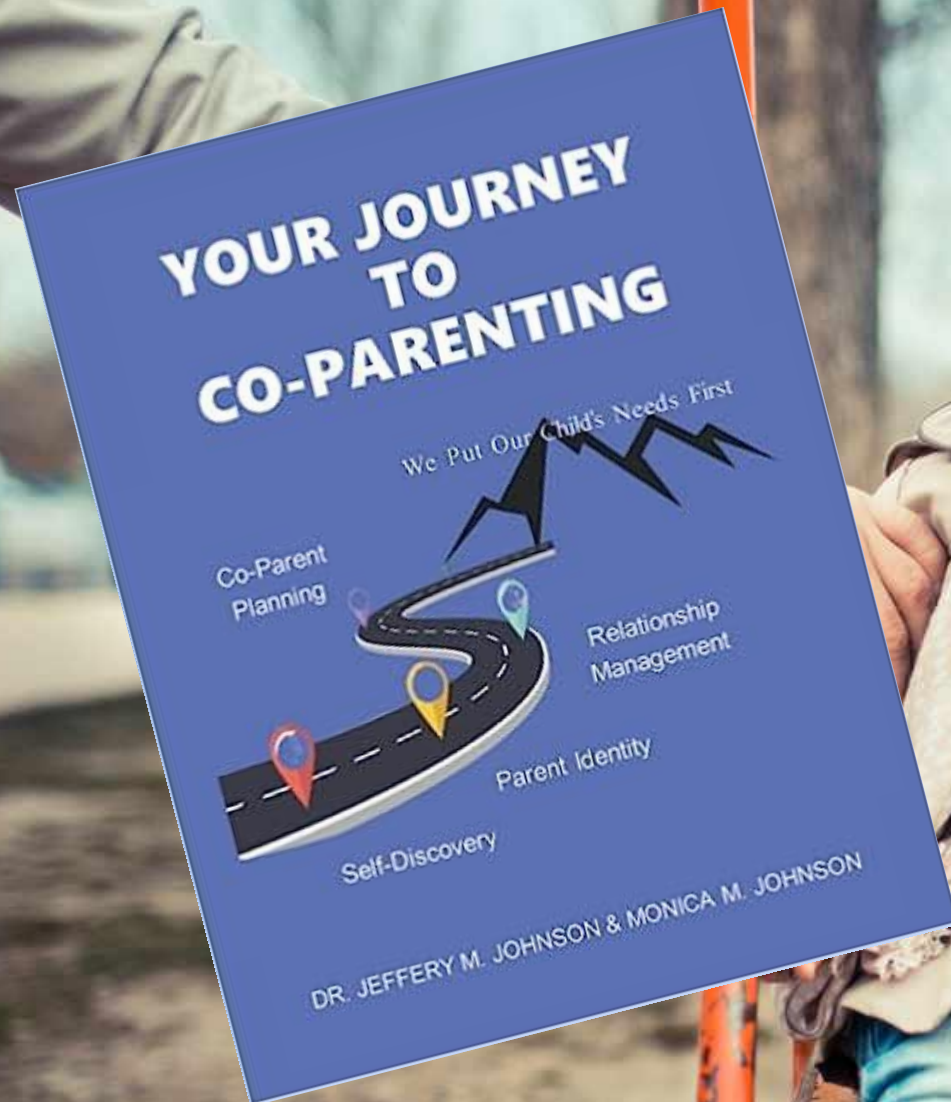
FUTURE

**New Paradigm is  
Co-Parenting Relationship Wellness**





# Co-Parenting



Co-Parenting: A New Paradigm to Enhance the Relationship Health Among  
Low-Income Unmarried Parents

# FINAL POINTS

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- ❑ We must change the policies and systems that fail to address poor children's and their families needs. For too long, we have been in the “wilderness.”
- ❑ Co-parenting, while not a new approach, emerging evidence of promise are offering a new opportunity to engage fathers and mothers and address their relational challenges as unmarried parents that want the best for their children, particularly low-income parents who are not romantically involved.
- ❑ Co-parenting agreements embody the actions unmarried parents will need to take to keep both parents engaged in the life of their children from birth and beyond. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to a co-parenting agreement.
- ❑ We must build agency and practitioner capacity to implement co-parenting content in programs providing services to fathers and mothers.
- ❑ It will be necessary to offer separate classes/sessions for mothers and fathers in their journey to co-parenting.

