

Transcript of The Vital Role of Fathers

Alison Fulton: Good morning. I am Alison Fulton, Family Support Coordinator with the Pennsylvania Family Support Team, based at the Center for Schools and Communities. I will be your moderator for today. In addition of myself, [inaudible 00:00:12] will also be assisting with the facilitation of the session this morning.

It is our pleasure to welcome you to today's webinar session, The Vital Role of Fathers. We will have three panelists that are presenting with us this morning. Our panelists are Yvonne Andrews, Jeannette Rice, and Kenneth Strother. Yvonne currently serves as the Lead Facilitator for Turning Points for Children, a Social Service Agency in Philadelphia. Yvonne has provided services to community residents for over 25 years. She successfully supported reunification of families, created and developed internship opportunities for community residents, which focused on domestic violence, organized anti [inaudible 00:00:52], supported incarcerated fathers on parole to enhance communication with their children, and assisted young adults to assume leadership roles in their neighborhoods. Yvonne holds a Master of Human Services degree from Lincoln University.

Jeannette Rice holds a Master's degree from Penn State University. She has been the Program Supervisor for the Parents As Teachers program at the Children's Advocacy Center of Lawrence County for the past 10 years. She is also the Project Developer and Supervisor for the Fatherhood program at the Center.

And Kenneth Strother is the Prevention Services Specialist and Facilitator of the Nurturing Fathers program with Family Resources of Pennsylvania. He has been employed with Family Resources for five years and has worked directly with fathers for four. Kenneth is an active member of the Fathers Collaborative Council of Western Pennsylvania. Through this work, he has had the opportunity to work with teen fathers in the Pittsburgh Public school system and has conducted various fathering programming throughout the region with other neighboring family support centers.

It is my pleasure to welcome all three of our panelists this morning. Before turning over the microphone to hear from them, I have a few items I'd like to share with you. Let's get started. I'd be interested if you would use the raised hand feature to know how many of you have seen the new Kung Fu Panda 3 movie that was just released last month? If you have, please go ahead and raise your hand. For those of you that have not seen it, let me give you a little background. Po, the main character, reunites with his long, lost birth father. Po was separated from his family at a young age and grew up with his adoptive father. When his father comes back into his life, everything changes. The film highlights the special relationship between Po and his birth father, and his adoptive father, and the unique challenges he is able to overcome with the love and support of both his fathers.

Through the Fatherhood Involvement Campaign, the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse and the AdCouncil, have created an ad to remind all fathers that their involvement is essential to their children's well-being. With our topic today being the Vital Role of Fathers, I thought this was appropriate to get us kicked off with our session today. So, let's go ahead and watch the ad now.

Ad: It's not always easy being a dad. But when you make an effort, it's always worth it. The smallest moments can have the biggest impact on a child's life. Take time to be a dad today. Call 877-4-DAD-411 or visit fatherhood.gov to learn more.

Alison Fulton: I just thought that that seemed like it was appropriate for today's presentation. So, if you would be interested, know that you can go to fatherhood.gov, and some of the resources are listed on the final slide of today's presentation. But there is a link available to the ads that have been put together via the Fatherhood Involvement Campaign. And so, there was a handful of them that they have created to support the role of fathers, based on this Kung Fu Panda 3 movie.

All right. So we would like to hear from you now, in getting started. So we want to know for those of you that are on the webinar today, the programs that you are a part of, do you provide specialized groups or activities that are just for dads? And there will be a polling window that appears. And there it is for you. So go ahead and select yes or no. Do you provide specialized groups or activities just for dads? All right Mike, let's go ahead and publish those results. All right. So just over a little half of you offer specialized groups or activities just for dads. So, we're gonna be hearing from a panelist to hear how some of their programs are organized and how they work with fathers. So, let's have a second one that will help us get into today's discussion.

So, of the fathers that are involved in your program, are most of them primary, single parents? Are they fathers from two parent homes? Or, are they non-custodial fathers? So, if you'll go ahead and select primary, fathers of two parent homes, or non-custodial fathers, that would be excellent. Okay Mike, let's go ahead. All right. So, a majority are fathers from two parent homes. Then we have some non-custodial fathers, and then fathers who are the primary parent.

Okay, well it was back in August, our Parents As Teachers state office sent out a survey to some of the PAT programs to gather some information regarding fathers. And so, we received 15 responses back from that survey, and here are just a few of the highlights that I wanted to share from that survey. So, in this way, in this survey, the results showed that primary, single dads were the most involved, that they participated in the components of Parents As Teachers the most. So that might have been home, personal visits. It might have been group connections, screenings, or resource connections. But, primary, single dads were the most involved. But most programs did provide some specialized fatherhood groups. There were just a couple programs that worked with incarcerated fathers, and one of those programs, we'll hear from this morning. And then there was one program who stated that they used a modified approach in working with fathers.

So, as a result of today's presentation, we hope that you can gather some ideas and suggestions on how to more intentionally engage fathers in your program, by considering and addressing the specific needs of dads. So, let's go ahead and get started and hear from our first panelist. So I would like to turn the microphone over to Yvonne, with Turning Points for Children, so that she can tell us a little bit about how Turning Points focuses on fathers. Yvonne, the microphone is now yours.

Yvonne Andrews: Well good morning everyone. I am so excited about being asked to serve on this panel to speak about Turning Points for Children's work with our fathers. Turning Points has really made an effort in serving fathers. Currently, we have a teen father's group, and we have a group that we work with fathers who are in a shelter, and we did have a group where we worked with incarcerated fathers. So, it's really wonderful to work for an agency that really, even in our literature, we try to have fathers on our pamphlets and our other items that we send out, just so they know that we understand and respect the vital role that they play in their children's lives.

Alison Fulton: Excellent. Thank you Yvonne. I appreciate hearing about the things that Turning Points does to involve fathers. So let's go ahead to Jeannette. Why don't you tell us a little bit about how the Children's Advocacy Center of Lawrence County is working to support fathers?

Jeannette Rice: All right. Good morning. We have an actual fatherhood program that provides services to two major groups, one being incarcerated fathers. And so the facilitator goes into the jail, our local county jail, and he works with one pod at a time of fathers. So there's about maybe between 17 and 20 guys, depending who's in the jail at any one time. And he provides ... They do a variety of services, and when you go into, at least into our county jail, there's some unique kinds of things that you can't do in the jail that you can do in other places.

So you have to really think about different ways of providing the service. So you can't use pencils. You can't leave paper. You can't leave books. Those are all banned types of different things. But does try ... He's gotten permission ... One of the fun things that he does with them, that the gentlemen that are incarcerated have really appreciated is he got special permission that they're able to write letters, that they get the envelopes, and the jail now is providing the stamps and all to send the letters, that they can send letters home to their children. And for some of those guys, they've not had contact with their children while they have been incarcerated. And so, again, it's something that has helped them to start to develop a relationship.

So that's one of the groups that he really focuses on. And then at the other end of the spectrum, he focuses on teens. And so, that's a collaboration that we found really took off when we were able to partner with the Elect program out of the IU, and being able to go in and work with fathers who were identified within the school districts. So those are the two main programs, and then again, just trying to do some similar things that Yvonne was talking about, letting fathers know that they are welcome. And so having materials available, having fathers placed in

those materials, having the home visitors trying to reach out to the fathers, finding what is the composition within the families, who is involved, and so reaching out and trying to engage those fathers.

Alison Fulton: Excellent. Thank you Jeannette. I appreciate you sharing the work that the Advocacy Center is doing. So Kenneth, let's go ahead and hear from you. Would you please take a few moments to tell us about how Family Resources is supporting fathers in your community?

Kenneth S.: All right. Thank you. I have been working with [inaudible 00:11:44] fathers for the past four years, and our Nurturing Fathers program is designed to help participants build upon their own [inaudible 00:11:51] and experiences, providing support in improving communication with co-parenting skills, managing stress with families, in their work life, and then supporting them through [inaudible 00:12:04] and peer support among fathers. We work in a [inaudible 00:12:08] area of the Hill District, South Oakland, and uptown areas, and we have one father that we're getting ready to enroll. He'll be our first father in the Parents as Teachers that will participate in our process with this as well.

Alison Fulton: Great. Thank you. And Kenneth, would you just talk a little bit as well about the Fathers Collaborative Council that is there in Southwestern Pennsylvania?

Kenneth S.: Yes, it's a network of fathering programs through Allegheny County and Beaver County, that we found initially when I started, that the experiences across the board that we were all having some of the same issues, and but the Fatherhood Collaborative would try to provide a unique opportunity for us to link up together as fathering programs, to share our knowledge of fathering programs in each of the support centers that we work with, and provide the fathers with the opportunity to do some things that are very unique with their children. And in the process of doing that, we have grown tremendously with support that we have been getting here through Allegheny. And in the process, in the state level, with a state representative at Allegheny who has supported us a great deal in this process is trying to just get the word out and support for our fathering programs, which 90% of the programs are not funded for fathering programs.

Alison Fulton: Thank you. That's very interesting, and I think it says a lot that you have a state representative that is now involved as well. And probably if only one program approached him, it would not have made as much of a difference. But the fact that you have this Collaborative that brings many of the fathering programs together as one voice, in terms of the importance of involving fathers, it probably made much more of an impact with that state representative and allowed him to be able to support those efforts. So, thank you for sharing that information.

Kenneth S.: [inaudible 00:14:29]

Alison Fulton: So, let's go ahead and turn to some of the questions that we have for our panelists this morning. I think we'll hear from all three of our panelists. Why don't we go ahead and we'll start with Yvonne. And I would be interested in knowing if

there are different approaches that you feel are needed to engage those different types of fathers, and truly to engage those fathers effectively.

Yvonne Andrews: Well you know my experience has been reaching out to fathers works best when you are supporting them, and letting them know how important they are and needed in their children's life. Therefore, my approach is engaging fathers in conversations, which supports their role as fathers. So, no matter how I do my outreach or my recruitment, I always go in letting them know that back in the day, the moms were the ones that were suggested to be most important in a child's life, but through research we've found that that father is just important. The praise that he gives his child, the hug that he gives his child, all that is helping the child's brain development. I try to let them know that yes, financial support is necessary, but they also need those other things that most often are so associated with moms.

So, I go in listening and I role model nurturing, so they can carry that home to their children. So, I really don't change my approach, whether I'm dealing with incarcerated fathers, or teen fathers, or even fathers that are in the home co-parenting together. My approach is the same whenever I'm out there outreaching and recruiting fathers for my program.

Alison Fulton: Thanks Yvonne. This is [inaudible 00:16:41]. I have a follow up question for you. Could you talk a little bit about how you have found it's important to find community leaders that are already connected with fathers, to assist with recruitment, and to encourage the fathers to attend classes?

Yvonne Andrews: Well, you know, we try to go to where fathers are. Now, you'd be surprised that most of my outreach, I do on my own. But I do reach out. In fact, we've been successful in engaging fathers who are currently residing in the shelter. So, I have been really successful with bringing the Director of the shelter onboard. So he really, really promotes the group by displaying flyers, by really meeting with his staff, encouraging them to refer fathers to our group. The other thing is we do the groups that I do all with men, so they have that other father's approach. But you know, not only community leaders, but also folks that are in places where fathers are. Workforce development fathers. I walk throughout the halls and try to reach out to the case managers, and anybody. If I see a janitor, you know, I'll reach out to him because he can really say to the fathers that I'm trying to get to, "Hey man. Did you check out that flyer about that father's group that they offer?" So I don't know [inaudible 00:18:40], did that answer your question a little bit?

Alison Fulton: It did. I was hoping that you would mention how you've connected with different staff at the two places that you're holding your Nurturing Fathers groups. And also, I'm happy that you mentioned that you have both a male and a female facilitator for your Nurturing Parenting groups, and that seems to have worked really well for you.

Yvonne Andrews: Yes. Yes, it has. It has.

Alison Fulton: Great. Thank you Yvonne. How about Jeannette? Are there different approaches that you take to engaging fathers effectively?

Jeannette Rice: Well, I think that Yvonne is absolutely right in that you engage people, whether they're fathers or mothers. You use the skills to engage them. But in looking at there are different strategies that we've done to try to initially reach out to people. Obviously with the incarcerated group, they're right there, and if they have children and he is, and that's where the program in that pod is taking place, and it's about 10-12 weeks, then anybody can participate and can be there. And what we have found is that they have really enjoyed being involved in the programming, that the social workers at the jail have even said that the guys monitor each other within the pods, and say things like, "You know if you do that, you're not gonna get to go to the fatherhood group," because they've really enjoyed being able to talk about their children, and being able to start to look at ways that they might be able to be involved in their child's lives once they've left the jail. But they're there, and initially they like to just get out into a different environment, which is the initial reason that a lot of them will go. But then they get hooked and enjoy doing it.

But some of the other approaches, like with the teen dads, we really struggled for a long time getting teen dads involved in some of the programming. But then when we did begin to develop a collaboration with the Elect program, and they could again, pull those young men in and then giving our Fatherhood person the opportunity to talk with them, and then get them engaged. We've also used a lot of the guidance counselors at the school districts, and we've also used the coaches, where they've identified maybe some of the young men that might be on the football team, or their basketball teams, who may have children, getting them again, saying this is a good idea. This is a good program for you to be involved in. So we've reached out to some of those different folks to try to pull in people from those teen dads.

And then it's always interesting, how do you approach dads that may be in a two parent family? Or it may not be a two parent family. They may be non-custodial, or they may be involved in the family, but they're just not living with mom. But maybe they are pretty actively involved, and how to reach out to them. And again, sometimes it's about getting past mom because she may or may not be happy about you interacting with the dad. And so, again, using some of those different strategies about identifying. But in terms of once you have them, again, I agree with Yvonne, it is very much about just that relationship.

Alison Fulton: Thank you Jeannette. I think that showed how you use those other community resources that you have. So using those guidance counselors, coaches, the other program staff that are working with fathers. And your final point of sometimes it's getting mom to understand the importance of the father being involved. For those of you who were able to participate last month on our webinar with Patrick Patterson, he talked a lot about that, that sometimes it's helping the moms to have that understanding of dads are an important role and it's not taking anything away from you as the mom, but there are things that dads need to

provide as well. So, even if your outreach is successful with the father, it's also working with that mother.

So, thank you Jeannette. Kenneth, what about for you and your program? Different approaches that you might need to use to engage fathers?

Kenneth S.:

Most definitely. I think it's very important that personality has a lot to do with engaging fathers. We meet the fathers where they are, and try to have the opportunity to be very open and honest with the fathers but also, being direct with them. With sharing background history of me being a father myself, I have a unique opportunity, because I have two boys and twin daughters, so being in that realm, I know how to raise a boy. I really don't have a problem with that, but when it came to raising daughters, I kind of struggled in that area. So, as much as a give into the program, I get out of the program as well with sharing our different backgrounds and experiences as fathers. So it helps promote on both sides of it.

You should also have knowledge of the area where you're at, and especially from the community that we serve the Hill District [inaudible 00:25:03] Oakland. I'm from this area, so I have a unique perspective on the type of environment and the environment that we live in, and with some of the [inaudible 00:25:13] or with our fathers. One of the things that I think is very, very important is to [inaudible 00:25:20] the Fatherhood Collaborative that I work with and that I'm part of. There's seven other programs that we work in connection with, which is the Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Children's Hospital, Allegheny Family Network, The Kingsley Association, Children and Youth and Families, and there's the Father's Program out of Aliquippa.

And with that network, we get a unique perspective on everything that is going on in our region and with some of struggles [inaudible 00:25:50], we try to collaborate together to help meet the needs of the father in a holistic approach. And we're very direct and pointed, and what I mean by that is, Jeannette was talking about difficulties of reaching teen fathers. And that's across the board. Nobody is not experienced in the same difficulties. And in our process, you have fathers that are teens, and some of them don't even know that they're fathers. So that's a struggle in itself. Pittsburgh Public School System has allowed me to come in and work with various Father's Programs that they have, but the problem is that some of the younger [inaudible 00:26:31] don't even know that they are fathers, or potential fathers.

And then in retrospect, it's very difficult to engage fathers because they're in school for the bulk of the time where some of the services that programs provide. We provide our programs in the evening, which is a little bit more conducive for our fathers to get to the programs because they're working during the day, or they're job searching, or just don't have the opportunity. So, this is a good process for us to utilize with teens, is that we actually go into the schools and spend either their lunch time or the recess time, which provides us with about 45 minutes at a time to work with the fathers.

Alison Fulton: Thank you Kenneth. I wanted to point out that a comment came in from Craig, that he has seen that non-custodial fathers who maybe haven't been in a child's life, but then become involved, and mom is not necessarily interested or wanting to have him be involved in the child's life. So, that certainly seems to be a theme that can come up. And I don't know, Kenneth, if you wanted to speak at all to that to see how you might help a mom understand the importance of a dad being involved.

Kenneth S.: Well, we generally ask moms, you have to be patient with us. There's a long process and I know there's a history sometimes when it comes to the father not being a lot in the child's lives, or in the mother's lives. So, and not [inaudible 00:28:25] the father that wants to be in the child's life, and if mom is not willing to, then he's gonna have to go the legal route and get his rights as far as custody, or shared custody, or visitation, or those type of things. And our fathers have had the premise that all rights are granted when we go to court, and that's not true. It is a process and you have to be patient. And moms, we ask them to be understanding, even though I know that we put our mothers through very stressful situations, trying times.

And that's one of the things that I think that we share with the fathers, is that we have to stop playing games with the women that are in our lives, and those that have our children. That we have to step up to the plate, and we have to pull our pants up, literally, and put ourself in the position that if you're gonna be a father, to take that [inaudible 00:29:25]. And the most important rule is being consistent, and being honest, and being truthful. Don't step into these mothers' lives, and try to trick them or persuade them not to seek for child support and those type of things. We have a responsibility, and you laid down and had this child, and now it's your responsibility to take care of the child. So we put the emphasis on the father, and not so much on what the mom is not doing, as much as what the father should be doing.

Alison Fulton: Thank you Kenneth. So, actually there's a couple questions that are coming in, and I'm gonna open Yvonne's mic too, in case you want to respond. And Jeannette, if you want to respond to either of these questions, as well. One question is, do you provide assistance with fathers seeking legal consultation to gain custody? And then, a sort of somewhat related question, do you find that it is hard to convince some fathers to go through the court process to get their rights?

So let me just unmute everybody. Okay. Go ahead.

Yvonne Andrews: This is Yvonne. I can share that we do offer ... We'll have a special group, and we call it a field trip group, where we might go to a different location, but we bring in a speaker that brings in information on how a father can apply for his rights, different things, how he should handle himself in court. I have done that with each of my fathers' groups, having an opportunity for a speaker to come in because they do feel like they don't have any rights. So that is one thing that Turning Points for Children does, by having a special group where they can understand their rights more.

Jeannette Rice: Yeah, we don't necessarily do something like that. If that's an issue, we will make referrals. We might help the father to connect with an attorney if that's one of the areas that he's looking at. One of the things that, again, especially with the incarcerated fathers, but the one thing that we're always working with them about is respect for the mother of your children. And you may not like her. You may not even have a great relationship with her at this point, but you have to, at least, figure out a way for the child to develop a relationship. And I really like what Kenneth said, just about that consistency, and developing that relationship. I think that's really, really important.

Kenneth S.: Here at Family Resources, we are unable to provide any advice. We provide legal advice but we don't provide legal advice to the father, but we can point them in the right direction. Through Children, Youth and Families, and Allegheny Family Network with Jerry Harvey and George Fleming, they work directly with fathers in our process. So those two programs work directly with incarcerated fathers, or in that legal process. But we all work with fathers providing workshops with Children, Youth and Families, that provides workshops and guidance for fathers that are going through the legal process.

Yes, it is a struggle because sometimes fathers do not want to go down to the court system and seek their rights as fathers. And that's one of the struggles that we see across the board, that fathers do not want to go down to the courts because of either their background or experiences that they had down there. And the message is that we are not equal when it comes to the rights and [inaudible 00:33:46] of the courts.

Alison Fulton: Thank you very much to all of our panelists for answering some questions that have been coming in from the chat box. Why don't we go ahead and move on to the next question? And Yvonne, I think I'll start with you for this one. I'd be interested in hearing what type of challenges arise when engaging fathers, and how might staff overcome those challenges?

Yvonne Andrews: Well, a typical challenge, and we did go over that a little bit, is that fathers come to group angry. They're angry in regards to their relationship with their children's mother. So it takes us some time to be able to let them vent, to encourage them that to develop a positive relationship with their children's mother is beneficial to the child. Often times, I may use role plays, that focus on that area so that they can see how detrimental it is when they're arguing and carrying on, and how it affects the child. I've been successful with that, but it is a challenge because they just don't want to get along.

The other challenge is in working with fathers who may be in a halfway house, or have substance abuse, and they may have to drop out of group because they have done something that prevents them from continuing to come. So, that's a challenge. And I think we already talked about a little bit, where we do have challenges with recruiting our young teen fathers. So, those are just typically some of the challenges that we face. But our program, being a 13 week program, our goals are to have them come in and complete each of the sessions. So, it's really disheartening when you have a father that comes in, and he's energetic,

and maybe he has attended nine to 10 sessions, and then something happens, and his life that prevents him to come back. But, that happens a lot. So those are just some of the challenges that I have experienced.

Alison Fulton: Thank you. And I think your example of role playing, the fact that for your program, you have co-facilitators, a male and a female, it allows for that opportunity to role play to show the negative aspects if a mother and father are always arguing, as well as the positive that can come out of a relationship when folks can just talk together. So, I think that's, I'm sure is a benefit for those fathers to be able to see that relationship.

Jeannette, how about you? What are the types of challenges that typically arise when engaging fathers?

Jeannette Rice: I'd like to take the question just in a little bit different, and talk about a programmatic challenge, as opposed to challenges with the father themselves. But, challenges within the program, when engaging fathers. And one of the things is that when you have, at least for us, we have a fatherhood program. It's only 15 hours a week though. It's, again, sometimes funding fatherhood programs are difficult getting the money specifically there. So, it's only about 15 hours to 20 hours a week. And so, for a program to be committed to working with fathers, it can't just be that one person that's hired into the fatherhood program. It's not just his responsibility. And so the challenge is, a lot sometimes, a lot of times, is getting the entire [inaudible 00:37:54] on board, that this is everybody's responsibility to engage fathers. It's not just filling out a referral form, ne sending it over to the fatherhood program.

But, if you're doing home visiting, [inaudible 00:38:09] doing play groups, how do you pull fathers into those programs? And again, most of the referrals that come in, come in with mom as being, even when it is a two parent family, you get mom's name. You don't get dad's name. The initial outreach is generally to mom. And so, staff get very comfortable in that role of just responding to mom. That relationship gets developed with mom. And if dad is absent or he's non-custodial, if he's got some other issues, he's maybe abusive, he doesn't help to support financially, just all of these other things, he kind of becomes the bad guy. And I said that with quotes. But, what I mean is that sometimes then, the home visitor's alliance is with mom, and isn't able to find ways to draw dad in.

We've been really fortunate here. We have two home visitors who are guys also. And so we have two males who can go out and also do home visiting. And they don't just work with dads. Generally they're going in and working with moms. But I think that's a big challenge, is that as agencies, we all have to take a look at how are we going to reach out. How are we going to also get our staff on board to understand that this is a bigger question than just the fatherhood program, but it's everybody's responsibility to reach out within families, and to find out what that family composition is, and what is the relationship. Sometimes with moms ... We've got a mom with four children, and four different dads. And so, how do you pull all of those dads in? Or how do you reach out to them? So, some of those challenges are huge programmatic challenges that we really have to look at, and

ask ourselves what's our commitment as an agency to really working with fathers.

Alison Fulton: Thank you Jeannette. I really appreciate you bringing up that aspect of the challenges with the program itself, and structurally and how fathers can be engaged. So thank you. Kenneth or Yvonne, anything else that you might want to add with this question?

Kenneth S.: Well, I'll just [dogtail 00:40:51] off of what Jeannette was sharing. There's two major supporters for what is needed for the fathers program. One, that is at a state level where money is very, very important. And two, the support of women. And some of our strongest backers and supporters are females, for the fathers program. Money basically drives everything. And you have to have money and resources available to fathers or fathering programs, to do what we need to do. And having the support of women in the process of that because at the end of the day, that's who we have to support, are the mothers of the world, and doing our part in that process.

Alison Fulton: All right. Thank you very much. Let's go ahead and we'll move on to our next question because it's tied into some of the information that was being share. And this is related to messaging. So, what message do programs need to send to fathers, to let them know that home [inaudible 00:41:58] or other parent education services are for them too? Kenneth, if there is anything in addition that you want to share, we've kind of touched on this a little bit through those first two questions as well, but, messages or messaging that needs to be sent to fathers.

Kenneth S.: Well, I believe that the language has to be [normal 00:42:19], which usually excludes fathers from the programs when we do our home visiting, and those type of things. But, I think the centers for programs need to be inviting to males with various or ... I'm amazed at some of the color schemes when I walk into some of these programs. It's a lot of pictures and posters of mother and child. And there's no pictures of fathers. So, that's one area that we try to strengthen here at the Center for Nurturing Families, is that we try to make it inviting for fathers when they come in, that there's visual aids, that there is support here at the Center.

The conversations and the plannings have to include the fathers in this process as well, that they're a part of it, that everything is not catered to just the mom and the child, that the fathers are included in goal plans, the home visiting. Even the times of the day, if they are not present that we want to make it available to him to set up the times when we do home visiting, for the fathers to be included in that. Or, at least, to be invited in the process.

Alison Fulton: Thank you Kenneth. We have a question that's come in, so I'm gonna open it up to all of the panelists. It's kind of related to messaging. The question is, what are some of the strength-based approaches that you use to engage the fathers?

Kenneth S.: Well, with the Fatherhood Collaborative, we provide four opportunities or events each year to engage fathers. We have our annual father/daughter dance, which

we do every year, and it's right around the time [inaudible 00:44:11]. This year it's gonna be February 26th. And the tickets are \$25, but what you get with the \$25 is a catered dinner. The daughters get a rose or a corsage. The fathers get a boutonniere. It's a red carpet affair, so we dress up, and we have some programs that donate clothing for fathers that don't have the attire to wear, or have the attire for the daughters.

We have a FCC annual fathers' cookout that we provide for the fathers every year. We take a trip up to the Pittsburgh Steeler training camp. And we have a father's awards dinner that we do. All these four events, and we do more, but these are four major events that we do each year, and it's at a minimum cost to the fathers. So, we feel that it's very important that fathers are able to engage with their children, and for those that don't necessarily have the funds to go to the Pitt game, or the Steeler games, and those type of things, is that we provide them that opportunity. And in the course of that, we get a lot of moms that say, "Hey, I want to be a part of this." There's some things that we just have to try to stronghold [inaudible 00:45:26] and have the fathers have the opportunity to spend this quality time with their children in a setting where money is not so much of the issue. It's just the experience and the qualitative environment that the father and the child is able to be in that setting.

Alison Fulton: Okay. Thank you. And so, Jeannette or Yvette, do you want to comment on any approaches that you take that focus on the strength of the fathers to engage them in your programming?

Yvonne Andrews: I think what I've said, every year or for the past couple years, there also has been a fathers/daddy/daughter dance that for the past couple years, Turning Points has actually bought tickets for the fathers. In fact, we've gotten a table and was able to send fathers to the daddy/daughter dance. We have, as I've said in the beginning, [inaudible 00:46:26] or materials that we circulate throughout the community, and have added pictures of dads to our brochures and things like that. So, that's another way. And everywhere I think it just demonstrates that we want for fathers to understand that they are vital to their children's development. So those are some things that we do.

Also, with our fathers groups, we offer opportunities for them to take their children on field trips. We've taken them to the zoo. And we've taken them to a large playground around here. And the thing is, the amazing thing is to see a father bring his children, who he has just reunited with, and it's just amazing to see them interact together. And also, it provides us an opportunity to see what information that they learned in group that they demonstrate with their children. So I think that we, at Turning Points, try very hard to make fathers understand that our services are for them as well as moms.

Alison Fulton: Okay. Jeannette, anything to add?

Jeannette Rice: Not really. We do a lot of similar types of things with offering them opportunities just within the community, and different kinds of outings. And a lot of those are

involved with the moms sometimes. Sometimes they aren't. It just depends on what particular activity they're doing.

Alison Fulton: Great. Thank you. Well let's move on to our last question that we have for our panelists. And this is specifically for Jeannette and Kenneth, because I'm asking about home visitation. For home visitations programs, is it enough just to engage the father in the personal visit? Or what other types of engagement are helpful in establishing that relationship between the home visitor and the father?

Jeannette Rice: Well I think that it is more than just the home visitation program, the personal visit, because again, sometimes those fathers can't be at the personal visit. Sometimes the father is working, and it's not convenient. He's exhausted when he gets home. It is important to try to, at least, involve him. So is that leaving things? Is that for the home visitor to perhaps reach out and make some phone calls at another time? To just let him know, hey, this is something we were working on. This is something that I saw your child do. Or what have you been seeing? So even if you're just engaging him in other ways, having other kinds of activities. I think for dads, a lot of things are very activity driven. They're real hands on. And so, being able to offer those other types of things, whether it's going fishing, offering that type of an outing, or whether it's ... It's a little harder for us to get to a Pitt or a Steeler game, to manage that transportation issue. But, doing things just within your local community.

You just have to think outside the box because a lot of times fathers aren't gonna be at the personal visit for a variety of reasons. They may not be together, or mom may not even want him there. We've actually also done where we meet with dad, and we meet with mom, in separate, because dad wants to do personal visits. Makes it a little bit more for the home visitor because now they're doing double, but that's what you gotta do to try to engage sometimes. And then it's just trying to ... Again, it's finding out from the dads what's important to them. What are the kinds of things that they want to do that will help them to develop that relationship with their child?

Kenneth S.: I agree with Jeannette. We don't have a box and it takes a lot of prep in the process of trying to work with dads. It'd be ideal if you can get all the fathers to come into group, and eat chicken wings, and talk about our experiences and those other things. And, a lot of times, that doesn't happen. I look to have fathers volunteer for a lot of things that we do at the Center, but I do it on a one-on-one basis. You have to look at what their scheduling is, what opportunities do they have available throughout the day, and how to jump on that. So, if they say, "I'm freed up on Tuesday at 3:00," well, I'm gonna get you Tuesday at 3:00. We're gonna go do some things together.

It's also ... I try not to make excuses, or eliminate the barriers that fathers have on why they can't do certain things. So, sometimes you have to try to pigeonhole them or put them in [inaudible 00:51:49]. What we were talking about earlier, that you have to hold fathers accountable, so if you say you're gonna do something. And then we have to hold ourselves accountable. So if i say I'm gonna have group, or I'm gonna come pick you up at a certain time, I need to be there. And

that's the first step of working with fathers is that honesty and trust has to be set in place before you can do anything else, working with men. I'm the same way myself. If somebody is gonna tell me to do something, that's what I expect you to do. And in the process, you build a rapport with the fathers and then you can go. You put out flyers. And you put things in newsletters. And no one shows up. And we have to go out and get the fathers, be it on a basketball court at the Y, if they're down there, then having a small conversation.

And it's a process building a one-on-one relationship that grows. And once you get one, you can have another one reach out to another father that is going through the same experiences. And that's from the form that we try to use here at the Center.

Alison Fulton: All right. Thank you. So, before we move on to talk a little bit about some of the resources that are available, there are a couple questions that came in. So I'd like to ask the panel. There are two questions that are related to funding. How are your programs funded? And then also, do you find that it is more difficult to find funding to work with fathers, than it is to find funding to work with mothers?

Kenneth S.: Funding, there is no funding when it comes to our program. We pull from our budget from other areas to fund some of the fathering programs that we provide here at the Center. That's why we had the opportunity to work with Allegheny at the state level, where we were up several months ago, and we were recognized on the floor up in Harrisburg. And that's where it starts at. You have to have ... We have individuals that are doing the legwork here, but we have to get it at the state level, and it has to be across the board. That's why with the FCC, we are challenging our state representatives to start providing funding for the types of programs that Yvonne, that Jeannette is in, and those that aren't here. We have to do it at a state level, and we have to get the momentum going where those programs are needed.

There is monies for mothers' programs across the board, and there's nothing wrong with that. We just want to have some funding added to the pot, so we can get a piece as well.

Jeannette Rice: Yeah, our funding for our fatherhood program is very limited. It's through the Family Center budget stream. And it's through the state. And, like I said, it's only for about 15 a week. So again, you become very creative. So, with some of our other funding, if part of our other funding allows for us to do group activities, then you might designate some of those group activities as father only, so that you can use some of that money. You're still doing groups. You're still within the guidelines of your grant. You're just maybe using it for a specific population. And then it's about going into the community and trying to find those folks willing to collaborate with you, whether it's churches. There are a lot of churches that have men's prayer groups. And they might have some money. And it might be \$25 here, \$50 there. But it's enough that you can buy pizzas for your group, when you're bringing the guys together. So it's just again, having to think very creatively about how you're going to get some of that money, and then who can be your partners in your community?

Yvonne Andrews: I just want to add that I agree that funding is limited. I think that we are in a special position that we do have our fathers' group, but we also have co-ed groups that include both moms and dads. So we still are serving our fathers that aren't in just a fathers' group. And you know what? I can't really end this webinar without saying that I have to give credit to my supervisor, Louise [Leibowitz 00:56:34] who's always searching for funding for programs and how we can include our fathers.

Alison Fulton: Thank you to all of our panelists. We are getting close to the end of our time together today, so I think we're gonna put up the slide that has some of the resources listed. I did want to mention that we did have Patrick Patterson who talked to us last month about engaging fathers. And if you were not able to join us for that webinar, his, the archived version is at our website, pa-pat.org. And so, you could visit there. That's where this webinar will be recorded as well. And if you did not receive the slides via email this morning, they are available here in the go to webinar control panel, in the handouts window.

So, I do want to, at this time because we are at 11:00, again just thank our three panelists for their participation in today's webinar. I want to thank our participants as well. We really appreciated the questions coming in, and the feedback that we received from those in the field. As I stated, the archived version will be at our Pennsylvania PAT website. You are gonna receive an electronic evaluation via email. Please take a couple minutes to complete that because it does help us every month when we are planning our webinars.

We do have some date changes for upcoming webinars, so please take a note. I know we usually try to do the first Wednesday of the month. In March, we've had to move to March 23rd. It's almost the last Wednesday of the month. That webinar is gonna be The Effects of Poverty on Parenting. That invitation is gonna be going out shortly, so we encourage all of you to join us for that. April 13th, as you notice, is the second Wednesday. That's gonna be on Healthy Brain Development of Children. And then, May 4th is gonna be on the Include Me program, that is available throughout Pennsylvania. So please mark those dates.

Again, thank you to all three of our panelists for their time and their effort, in putting together this webinar for us this morning. And I encourage all participants to complete that evaluation as it comes. So, thank you again for joining us, and this concludes today's webinar.