



USING LEARNING CYCLES TO STRENGTHEN FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

Final Report on the Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF) Study

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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Federally funded Responsible Fatherhood programs work with fathers to promote healthy relationships and marriages, strengthen parenting practices, and help fathers attain economic stability. For programs to improve fathers' outcomes, they need to be able to recruit fathers, engage them in services, and keep them actively participating in program activities. However, it is challenging for programs to achieve these participation goals. The Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF) study was designed to strengthen programs and build evidence on promising practices to improve the enrollment, engagement, and retention of fathers in program activities. Fatherhood programs participating in SIRF iteratively implemented and assessed promising approaches to addressing implementation challenges, with the support of and in partnership with the SIRF team.

PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Did the implemented approaches improve fathers' participation in the programs?
2. What aspects of the approaches were most challenging for programs to implement? What aspects did they implement most successfully?

PURPOSE

- **Outreach.** Programs used innovative ways of conducting recruitment and intake to enroll more fathers into programs and encourage more fathers to show up for initial workshops.
- **Peer mentoring.** Program alumni or fathers with experience with the program served as mentors to newly enrolled fathers with the aim of increasing the number of fathers who persist through the program.
- **Coaching.** Case managers used coaching techniques. Staff members used open-ended questions to talk with fathers about their goals and how to achieve them. Coaching was intended to increase the number of fathers who complete the program.

KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS

- **Case managers and fathers thought coaching helped them develop better relationships, but staff members in the outreach and peer mentoring clusters were concerned that the approach they tested did not encourage strong relationships with fathers.** In the

coaching cluster, case managers and fathers thought coaching helped them develop better relationships by encouraging case managers to listen in a nonjudgmental way rather than to solve the father's problems. In the outreach cluster, by contrast, programs used text messages rather than phone calls since fathers were more likely to see them, but staff members thought that relying on text messages might make it difficult for them to build strong relationships with fathers because fathers often did not respond to the messages. Some staff thought the approaches taken in the peer mentoring cluster focused too much on collecting data rather than ensuring that mentors and fathers had substantive interactions.

- **In the outreach cluster, one approach to intake resulted in greater participation by fathers.** One approach, called ease-of-intake, emphasized the value of workshops while the second, called case management intake, emphasized the value of case management for meeting fathers' other needs. Fathers who received the ease-of-intake approach were more likely to enroll and to attend at least one workshop (although the second difference was not statistically significant). These differences were concentrated in one program, perhaps because it enrolled cohorts frequently, which reduced the time fathers had to wait to begin receiving program services. Retention was similar for the two groups, however.
- **In the peer mentoring cluster, an approach that required fathers to initiate contact with mentors resulted in greater participation than one that allowed mentors to initiate contact.** It is unclear why one approach worked better than the other, but information collected through interviews suggests that some fathers did not feel a need to connect with their mentor because they felt sufficiently supported by program staff members, and that they thought the mentor trying to contact them was intrusive.
- **Coaching did not appear to improve retention in workshops when compared to other data from programs that were not using coaching.** Fathers in the coaching cluster were as likely as fathers in the outreach cluster to attend at least one primary workshop and both groups attended about 70 percent of primary workshop hours.
- **Programs tried to improve the fidelity of implementation of the approaches across learning cycles.** For example, programs in the peer mentoring cluster struggled initially to find enough mentors and to engage mentors in working with fathers. Programs responded to this by reducing what they asked of mentors and by identifying mentors who had the time to commit to program activities. In the coaching cluster, case managers worked on becoming more comfortable with coaching throughout the learning cycles.
- **Program staff members generally viewed the learning cycles as a positive experience.** Participating in SIRC gave program staff members opportunities to talk about their programs and how to make them better. SIRC's emphasis on using data to make decisions also helped to establish a culture of using data for learning and innovating. Program staff members noted that because of SIRC they are thinking much more creatively about their approaches.

METHODS

To study the effects of the approaches on program participation, SIRF used several methods.

- **Outreach.** Fathers were randomly assigned to either an ease-of-intake approach or a case management intake approach. The ease-of-intake approach was intended to encourage fathers to attend workshops by stressing the value of the workshop. The case management intake approach was intended to help identify and meet other needs fathers might have.
- **Peer mentoring.** Fathers were randomly assigned to either a mentor-initiated group or a father-initiated group. Fathers could contact their mentors in either group, but mentors initiated contact only with fathers in the mentor-initiated group.
- **Coaching.** The effects of a coaching approach to case management were assessed by comparing program retention for fathers in these programs to outcomes for fathers in the outreach cluster.

To assess how well their approaches were doing and to adjust the approaches across cycles, participating programs and the SIRF team looked at several data sources, including data from a management information system (called nFORM) on program participation, observation forms developed by the study team and used by supervisors and staff members in the outreach and coaching clusters, and forms developed by the SIRF team to solicit reflections from fathers and staff members on program service experiences. Data from nFORM were supplemented by the “SIRFboard,” which the study team created to allow staff members to record data specific to the implementation of each cluster.

A mixed-methods implementation study collected qualitative and quantitative data from program staff members and fathers associated with each program, across all the rapid learning cycles. These data sources address questions about what it took to implement the approaches and how staff members and fathers experienced them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from SIRF suggest recommendations on how to improve participation in fatherhood programs and on how to operate rapid learning cycles.

- **In both the outreach and peer mentoring clusters, the more successful approach was less burdensome for fathers.** This suggests that future initiatives should strive to implement strategies that consider fathers’ preferences and do not add additional burdens. This take-away should be interpreted with caution, however, since the results were not seen in all cycles or across all programs. In addition, in the outreach cluster, improvements in initial workshop attendance had little effect on retention, suggesting that programs might want to combine these changes with other efforts to keep fathers attending workshops until the end of the program.

- **When using learning cycles in research, providing intensive training to staff members in participating programs and using longer cycles may improve implementation and learning.** In SIRC, staff members in participating programs were not immediately comfortable with the new approaches they were being asked to implement and the information they were being asked to collect to assess what was happening during the cycles. As a result, the first cycle often operated as a de facto pilot period. This suggests using more intensive training than was possible in SIRC or extending the period during which cycles operate to allow staff members to be more comfortable with what they must do.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the 1990s, federal and state governments have funded programs aimed at improving the well-being of fathers with low incomes and their children. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has funded fatherhood programs since 2006 to promote healthy relationships, support strong parent-child relationships, and help fathers attain economic stability. However, some programs have had difficulty recruiting fathers and keeping them engaged in services. Fathers cannot benefit if they do not participate, and low participation makes it difficult to study whether and how program services help fathers and their families.

To strengthen these programs and build evidence on promising practices to improve enrollment and program participation, the Administration for Children and Families contracted with MDRC and its partners MEF Associates and Insight Policy Research (now called Westat Insight) to conduct the Strengthening the Implementation of Fatherhood Programs (SIRF) study. In SIRF, 10 fatherhood programs used rapid learning cycles to implement and study promising approaches to improve enrollment in program services and to increase fathers' attendance at primary workshops (which are structured classes that represent the main programmatic activity).

The learning cycles took place over a year beginning in July 2021. Before the first cycle, the SIRF team trained program staff members in the chosen approaches. During each cycle, the program implemented the approach and they and the SIRF team collected relevant data. At the end of each cycle, the SIRF team and program staff members determined together whether and how to improve the approach for the next learning cycle. To help programs fully participate in learning cycles, SIRF provided funds to allow each program to hire a learning cycle manager, who helped the program carry out learning cycle activities, including ensuring that data were available for analysis. This report summarizes findings from the learning cycles.

OVERVIEW OF THE APPROACHES

SIRF studied three clusters of promising approaches:

- **Outreach.** Programs used innovative ways of conducting recruitment and intake to enroll more fathers into programs and encourage more fathers to show up for initial workshops.
- **Peer mentoring.** Program alumni or fathers with experience with the program served as mentors to newly enrolled fathers with the aim of increasing the number of fathers who persist through the program.
- **Coaching.** Case managers used coaching techniques. Staff members used open-ended questions to talk with fathers about their goals and how to achieve them. This approach was intended to increase the number of fathers who complete the program.

OUTREACH

Programs in the outreach cluster changed both their approach to recruiting fathers and their approach to enrolling them in services.

To increase recruitment, the programs tried two main strategies. First, they expanded their referral sources and tried to deepen relationships with existing referral sources by, for example, sending emails thanking them for their support and asking if they had anyone else to refer. Second, they experimented with social media, by varying the messages they posted to see which ones attracted the most interest and by using paid ads. These efforts resulted in a greater diversity of referral sources over time, with large increases in referrals from community providers, social media, and program alumni.

Programs compared two broad approaches to encourage fathers to enroll in the program and attend workshops. One approach—called ease-of-intake—focused on the benefits of attending workshops. The second approach—called case management intake—focused on helping fathers understand and use the programs’ other supportive services. The two approaches differed in how they communicated with fathers and the services fathers had access to prior to attending their first workshop. Over the cycles, programs experimented with how they used text messages, the scripts they used to communicate with fathers, and how they assessed the needs of fathers in the case management intake group.

PEER MENTORING

Four programs in the peer mentoring cluster wanted to improve fathers’ initial engagement and retention in their programs.

The programs compared two approaches: father-initiated and mentor-initiated peer mentoring. All fathers could contact their mentor; mentors contacted fathers only in the mentor-initiated approach. However, programs had difficulty recruiting, retaining, and fully engaging mentors. Across cycles, programs tried to improve the ability of mentors to undertake their intended activities by reducing the number of planned contacts with fathers in the mentor-initiated group and by using text messaging. Programs also tried to identify mentors who were more likely to have the time to commit to program activities. Some programs also tried to build a deeper relationship between fathers and mentors by using more phone, video, and in-person contact.

COACHING

Programs in the coaching cluster aimed to use coaching techniques in all case management interactions.

Using coaching techniques, case managers focused on having fathers define their goals and how to achieve them. Beginning with their first meeting with fathers, case managers used open-ended questions, affirmed and reflected on fathers' statements, encouraged fathers to talk about their needs, let fathers lead the process of setting goals, and used motivational interviewing techniques. Across cycles, programs worked on improving case managers' understanding of coaching techniques and case managers worked on becoming more comfortable using those techniques. They also experimented with changing the frequency, timing, and mode of expected contacts between case managers and fathers. These changes were intended to increase the opportunities for fathers to set goals and maintain progress, ensure fathers received adequate support, and strengthen the relationship between case managers and fathers. Finally, programs tried to better integrate content addressed in workshops and in conversations fathers had with their case managers.

REFLECTIONS FROM PROGRAM STAFF MEMBERS AND FATHERS

Through discussions with program staff members and participating fathers as well as other data sources, the team learned about how staff members and fathers viewed the studied approaches.

- **Case managers and fathers thought coaching helped them develop better relationships, but staff members in the outreach and peer mentoring clusters were concerned that the approach they tested did not encourage strong relationships with fathers.** In the coaching cluster, case managers and fathers thought coaching techniques helped them develop better relationships by encouraging case managers to listen in a nonjudgmental way rather than to solve fathers' problems. In the outreach cluster, by contrast, programs used text messages rather than phone calls since fathers were more likely to see them, but staff members thought that relying on text messages might make it difficult for them to build strong relationships because fathers often did not respond to the messages. Some staff members thought the approaches taken in the peer mentoring cluster focused too much on collecting data rather than on ensuring that mentors and fathers had substantive interactions.
- **Programs in the peer mentoring cluster struggled to identify mentors who would be able to carry out the role that was envisioned, and mentors struggled to successfully contact fathers.** When they did connect, however, mentors and fathers had positive experiences. One mentor described having open and honest conversations with fathers about his situation. Two fathers said the mentor motivated them to try the program and helped them feel more comfortable by letting them know they were not alone.
- **Staff members and fathers had mixed reactions to coaching.** Programs trained only case managers in coaching techniques. In the two programs where case managers and workshop facilitators were different people, fathers often experienced a more conventional problem-solving approach when they talked to workshop facilitators. Some fathers sought out workshop facilitators because they preferred their more direct problem-solving style, and some staff members argued that coaching was not appropriate for every interaction. However, both case

managers and fathers thought coaching helped them develop stronger relationships with one another.

- **Program staff members generally viewed the learning cycles as a positive experience.** Participating in SIRF gave program staff members opportunities to talk about their programs and how to improve them. SIRF's emphasis on using data to make decisions also helped to establish a culture of using data for learning and innovation. Program staff members noted that because of SIRF they are thinking much more creatively about their approaches.

EFFECTS OF THE APPROACHES ON PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

In the outreach cluster, more fathers in the ease-of-intake group enrolled and attended at least one primary workshop than fathers in the case management intake group. To assess their effectiveness, programs randomly assigned fathers to ease-of-intake or case management intake. Across all cycles, fathers in the ease-of-intake group were more likely to enroll than the case management intake group (40.2 percent versus 35.6 percent) and were more likely to attend at least one primary workshop (37.0 percent versus 32.8 percent), although only the effect on enrollment is statistically significant. These differences were concentrated in one program, which had a greater contrast between the two treatment groups, and which enrolled cohorts more often than the other programs, allowing fathers to wait less time before they could begin workshops. Differences in program retention between the two groups were small for all three programs.

In the peer mentoring cluster, the father-initiated group had better rates of participation than the mentor-initiated group. To assess their relative effectiveness, programs randomly assigned fathers to the two approaches. The father-initiated group was more likely to attend at least one primary workshop (87.2 percent versus 83.6 percent) and they attended a higher proportion of workshop hours (71.3 percent versus 64.1 percent), although only the latter difference is statistically significant. This suggests that the active, mentor-initiated approach discouraged fathers from participating, perhaps because they did not consistently welcome or understand the purpose of the contact from the mentor.

Coaching did not improve fathers' program participation. About 92 percent of fathers in the coaching cluster attended at least one primary workshop, which was about the same proportion among the comparison group of fathers in similar programs in the outreach cluster.¹ Likewise, fathers attended about 74 percent of workshop hours on average, about the same as fathers in similar programs in the outreach cluster. Program participation did not increase across cycles, despite programs' improved implementation of the coaching approach over time.

1. Random assignment was not feasible because it would have been difficult for case managers to use coaching with only some fathers and programs were not big enough to randomly assign case managers. For that reason, the effects of coaching were assessed by comparing outcomes for fathers in the coaching cluster with those in the outreach cluster since similar data were available for both clusters and the outreach cluster did not have the explicit goal of increasing retention in program services (unlike the peer mentoring cluster).

However, the effects of coaching were not estimated using a random assignment design, and the lack of effects of coaching might reflect the less rigorous design.

IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS

The goal of SIRF was to identify strategies that improve enrollment and participation in fatherhood programs. It is also one of the first attempts to incorporate a rigorous rapid learning framework in fatherhood programs. This section discusses lessons for conducting rapid learning studies in similar programs in the future.

Implications for Improving Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Multiple approaches improved initial engagement. For both the outreach and peer mentoring clusters, the more successful approach was the one that was less burdensome for fathers (ease-of-intake and father-initiated peer mentoring). This suggests that future initiatives should strive to implement strategies that consider fathers' preferences and do not add additional burdens. In addition, there were mixed effects across programs in the outreach cluster, which suggests that programs might require more tailoring of intake strategies before determining whether they are effective.

Programs in the coaching cluster did not improve initial engagement. Some staff members questioned whether coaching would lead to meaningful benefits for fathers, while some fathers found the coaching-based conversations to be frustrating because they preferred a more directive stance. This might suggest that coaching is not effective at increasing initial engagement. However, improved implementation and staff buy-in of the model might make the approach more effective.

While father-initiated mentoring resulted in greater retention than the mentor-initiated approach, the outreach and coaching clusters did not improve retention. It is possible that these approaches could improve retention with more time and additional refinements. It is also possible that the outreach approaches did not affect retention because they focused on the early stages of fathers' participation in the programs.

Implications for Future Rapid Learning

Learning cycle managers were an important resource for participating programs. They helped ensure that programs collected and analyzed data for the cyclical analytic process. More broadly, program staff members appreciated that building time for reflection into the learning cycles allowed them to analyze program data and brainstorm refinements.

Programs might benefit from more resources for training. Staff members need training on the approaches being tested, and some approaches (like coaching) require substantial training to fit within the context of the programs, especially if they differ substantially from staff members'

usual practices. Staff members also need training on rapid learning processes, including tracking the necessary data, conducting periodic reflections, and designing refinements in response to both data and reflections. Although SIRC provided training, staff members struggled to implement some approaches or took multiple cycles to become comfortable with data procedures and with periodic reflections.

Given the complexities of program operations, programs might need more cycles to tailor approaches to improve retention. Programs had only three or four cycles available to design and test improvements, and most programs required at least one cycle to implement new procedures well. This left at most three cycles for programs to test improvements.

Enhanced communication might be important. Programs might be able to improve implementation and compliance with rapid cycle procedures by enhancing communication among program staff members. In many cases, front line staff members who were not included in learning cycle activities felt disconnected from decisions made through SIRC. To ensure staff members' buy-in at all levels, future rapid learning efforts should include more staff members in the learning and decision-making processes.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, federal and state governments have funded programs aimed at improving the well-being of fathers with low incomes and their children. These efforts are a response to substantial evidence that fathers' engagement and financial support are critical foundations for child well-being.¹ Stagnant wages for men without college degrees and high rates of families where parents are separated or divorced have magnified the importance of programs that can improve fathers' capacity to provide that support.²

One source of funding for these programs is the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. OFA has funded Responsible Fatherhood programs since 2006 to promote or sustain marriages, support strong parent-child relationships, and help fathers attain economic stability.³ However, some programs have reported difficulty in recruiting fathers, engaging them in services, and keeping them actively participating in program activities. Fathers cannot benefit if they do not participate. Further, low participation makes it difficult to study whether and how different program services benefit fathers and their families.

To strengthen these programs and build evidence on promising practices to improve enrollment, engagement, and retention of fathers in program activities, the Administration for Children and Families contracted with MDRC and its partners MEF Associates and Insight Policy Research (now called Westat Insight) to conduct the Strengthening the Implementation of Responsible Fatherhood Programs (SIRF) study. In SIRF, 10 fatherhood programs used rapid learning cycles, an iterative evaluation approach that involved implementing promising approaches to address implementation challenges, working with the study team to assess whether the approaches were achieving their goals, and modifying the approaches over time to try to make them stronger.

The purpose of this report is to summarize results and lessons from the learning cycles. After providing additional background on the study, the report includes three sections that discuss what the programs intended to implement, how that changed across learning cycles, reflec-

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1. Cowan et al. (2008); Carlson and Magnuson (2011); Cancian, Meyer, and Han (2011).
 2. Mishel, Bivens, Gould, and Shierholz (2012); Michalopoulos, Behrmann, and Manno (2022); Smeeding, Garfinkel, and Mincy (2011).
 3. In this document, programs funded through grants from OFA are referred to as Responsible Fatherhood programs. For a description of the Responsible Fatherhood grant program, see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ofa/programs/healthy-marriage/responsible-fatherhood>.

tions from program staff members and participants about the tested approach, and the effects of the approach on fathers' enrollment and program participation. The report concludes with implications about improving program participation in fatherhood programs and operating learning cycles.

BACKGROUND ON RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS AND THE SIRF STUDY DESIGN

Under current authorizing legislation, fatherhood programs include services to help improve outcomes in three areas: the quality of father-child interactions, the quality and stability of fathers' relationships with their partners or spouses, and earnings and income. After programs introduce fathers to their services through activities such as one-on-one conversations and group orientations, they help fathers enroll. Programs provide most services in group workshops that consist of structured classes. Fathers participating in these programs might also have a case manager who can help them identify and meet other needs. For the current round of federal grants for fatherhood programs—called Fatherhood Family-focused, Interconnected, Resilient, and Essential, or “Fatherhood FIRE”—most programs provide workshops in cohorts in which a group of fathers are expected to attend the workshops together. Programs are required to provide at least 24 hours of primary workshops—which all fathers are expected to attend—although programs vary in whether workshops take place over a period of two weeks or two months or longer. Many programs offer optional workshops on a variety of topics, such as specific employment resources or help navigating the child support system.

To help these programs improve the participation of fathers they work with, SIRF began with a search for promising approaches to increase program participation. For this search, the SIRF team collected input from a diverse set of nearly 100 individuals, which included federal agency staff members, state agency staff members, curriculum developers, nonprofit funders, training and technical assistance providers, researchers, and staff members at fatherhood programs. These individuals were asked to provide their insights on the challenges faced by fatherhood programs and ways to address those challenges. The team also reviewed 54 reports and peer-reviewed articles produced since 2015 related to programming for fathers. Through this process, the study team identified several hundred challenges and possible approaches for addressing those challenges.⁴ The list was narrowed down using criteria that included whether the approaches could be used in a variety of settings, whether they might result in a change in fathers' participation that could be measured using easily accessible data, and whether they were amenable to the rapid learning approach. Details about this process, the approaches SIRF is studying, and the programs included in SIRF were described in an earlier report.⁵

4. These challenges and approaches are summarized in Marano, Israel, and Quezada (2022).

5. Michalopoulos, Behrmann, and Manno (2022).

What SIRF Studied

With the list of challenges and promising approaches in hand, the study team chose 10 fatherhood programs to participate in rapid learning cycles based on several factors, such as whether the program faced challenges that aligned with the ones the SIRF team had identified, the program's interest in SIRF, whether it served enough fathers to contribute to precise estimates of effects on program participation, and whether the program had the infrastructure and organizational capacity to participate in a research study. One of the 10 programs was not a Fatherhood FIRE grantee, but it was a grantee in a prior round of federal funding and it was included because it continued to serve enough fathers and offered services that were similar to the federal grantees. The team worked with the programs to identify participant challenges, and this resulted in programs testing approaches that fell within three clusters:⁶

- **Outreach:** The outreach cluster included three programs, which updated their recruitment messaging and the ways they used social media to try to attract interest from more fathers. Once the program was in contact with the men, they tested intake processes that aimed at enrolling fathers and encouraging them to attend the first primary workshop.
- **Peer mentoring:** The peer mentoring cluster included four programs, which tested whether support from former program participants could help fathers stay engaged until they had completed the primary workshops.
- **Coaching:** The three programs in the coaching cluster aimed to increase program completion by having case managers use coaching techniques to motivate participants and to have them determine their goals and how to achieve those goals.

Table 1 shows characteristics of the participating fatherhood programs and the organizations they are part of. As shown in the table, programs operated in different parts of the country, ranging from Long Beach, CA in the west to the Bronx, NY in the northeast. Although all programs offered at least 24 hours of primary workshops (as required by OFA for the federal grant recipients), some concentrated the workshops over a period of 3–4 weeks while two offered workshops over a period of 12 weeks. As discussed later in the report, differences in the duration of workshops influenced how many learning cycles a program could go through during a year. More information about the 10 programs is provided in Appendix A.

The SIRF Design

Over the course of a year beginning in July 2021, the study team collaborated with the 10 programs on implementing their chosen approaches. Each program went through three or four cycles during that year. As noted earlier, the cycles represented an iterative method of implementing

6. Although the initial list of challenges and approaches was created in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SIRF team also ensured that three broad approaches could be used in an environment in which services were not primarily delivered in person.

TABLE 1 Information about the Programs that Participated in SIRF Learning Cycles

Cluster	Program	Location	Primary Workshops		Primary Workshop(s) Duration
			Total Hours	Session(s)	
OUTREACH	Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.	Chautauqua County, NY	30	12	6 weeks
	Montefiore Medical Center, with BronxWorks	Bronx, NY	24	16	4 weeks
	Passages	Greater Cleveland, Ohio	27	14	Up to 7 weeks
PEER MENTORING	Action for Children	Franklin County, Ohio	24	10	5 weeks
	Center for Family Services	New Jersey, multiple locations	32	16	Up to 8 weeks
	City of Long Beach	Long Beach, CA	30	10	10 weeks
	Connections to Success	Missouri, multiple locations	48-60	10	3 weeks
COACHING	Children's Home and Aid	Illinois, multiple locations	24	12	12 weeks
	Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, MD	Montgomery County, Maryland	47	16	3 weeks
	Jewish Family & Children's Service of the Suncoast, Inc.	Florida, multiple locations	24	12	12 weeks

and modifying promising approaches to addressing challenges to fathers fully participating in program activities. SIRF refers to this cycle as Learn-Do-Reflect. At the beginning of the first cycle, the SIRF team helped train program staff members in the chosen approaches (Learn). During each cycle, the programs implemented the approaches and collected a variety of data (described later in this section) with support from the SIRF study team (Do). At the end of each cycle, the SIRF team and program staff members examined various data to assess together whether their chosen approach was being well implemented and how it could be improved for the next learning cycle (Reflect). If changes warranted further training, this happened at the beginning of the next cycle. The programs and study team collaborated during each part of each cycle, both to make sure SIRF studied approaches of interest to participating programs and to help position the programs with the knowledge and processes that would allow them to continue

rapid learning activities after the year had ended. To help programs fully participate in learning cycle activities, SIRF provided funds to allow each program to hire a learning cycle manager.

At the end of the year, the SIRF team examined the effects of the approaches on three aspects of participation in workshops: enrollment, initial engagement, and retention. In doing this, the team used random assignment in the outreach and peer mentoring clusters to study two different versions of those approaches (described below). Random assignment is intended to ensure that characteristics of fathers in the two groups were similar except for the approach that was used with them. The team assessed whether the approaches improved fathers' enrollment and participation in workshops for each cluster in the following ways:

- **Outreach:** Fathers who were recruited by the programs were randomly assigned before enrollment to one of two approaches, which this report refers to as ease-of-intake and case management intake. The ease-of-intake approach stressed the value of the workshops to encourage fathers to attend at least one workshop. Case management intake—which was not intended to make intake more difficult—stressed the importance of other supportive services that the programs provided and gave fathers an opportunity to help identify and meet their other needs, such as housing, transportation, or employment. The goal of case management intake was to encourage fathers to stay with the program by helping them see the program as having value beyond the workshops, by helping to build a relationship between the father and the case manager, and by helping to resolve needs that might keep the father from being able to attend workshops.
- **Peer mentoring:** Fathers were randomly assigned to a mentor-initiated group or a father-initiated group. Fathers could contact their mentors in either group, allowing them to take advantage of their mentor as desired. In the mentor-initiated group, mentors were expected to contact fathers at key points in the program or if they were missing activities such as workshops.
- **Coaching:** Random assignment was not feasible because it would have been difficult for case managers to use coaching techniques with only some participating fathers and programs were not big enough to randomly assign case managers to coaching or conventional case management. Instead, the team compared retention in program activities for fathers in these programs with fathers in the outreach cluster programs.⁷

To investigate the effects of these approaches on fathers' participation in workshops, SIRF examined several outcomes:

- Enrollment, which is the percentage of fathers who enrolled in the program among those who were recruited.

7. The peer mentoring cluster was not used as a comparison because peer mentoring was intended to affect retention in primary workshops, whereas the outreach approaches were primarily intended to affect enrollment and initial engagement.

- Initial engagement, which is the percentage of enrolled fathers who attended at least one primary workshop.
- Program retention (or dosage), which is the percentage of primary workshop hours that the father attended. The percentage of primary workshop hours was used rather than the number of workshops or number of hours of workshops attended because programs offered different numbers and total hours of primary workshops.

Data Sources

SIRF and participating programs used several data sources.

- **nFORM.** All Fatherhood FIRE grantees are required to use a management information system called nFORM (which stands for Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management) to collect and report performance measure data. For SIRF, Connections to Success—the one participating program that is not a current Fatherhood FIRE grantee—also agreed to use nFORM. The information collected via nFORM included fathers’ characteristics (from a web-based survey conducted around the time fathers enrolled in services), as well as information on participation in program activities. In addition to data collected by programs participating in SIRF, the SIRF team received aggregate client demographic data from nFORM for all Fatherhood FIRE grantees to see how similar fathers studied in SIRF were to the larger sample of Fatherhood FIRE participants.
- **SIRFboard.** To supplement nFORM data, the study team developed Excel templates (called SIRFboards) for program staff members to record data specific to their cluster. For example, the peer mentoring SIRFboards included data fields to log information about the planned and executed contacts between peer mentors and fathers. The outreach SIRFboards collected information about recruitment sources and social media posting as well as contacts with prospective participants during the intake process. The coaching SIRFboards collected information about the frequency with which case managers used coaching techniques during interactions with fathers. The SIRFboard also allowed program staff members to see graphical representations of the data they entered.
- **Observation forms.** To gain information about program activities and to provide structure for program staff members to reflect on their activities, the study team developed observation forms for the outreach and coaching clusters.⁸ The forms could be used by a supervisor observing a staff member working with a father or by a staff member reflecting on their meeting with a father. The observation form for the outreach cluster collected information about outreach strategies and recruitment conversations. The observation form for the coaching cluster collected information about the techniques staff members used during their

8. An observation form was not developed for the peer mentoring cluster because the study team, with input from program staff members, determined that observing a peer mentoring activity might change the nature of the relationship the peer mentor was developing with a father.

interactions with fathers and the key topics discussed. Appendix B presents copies of each cluster’s observation form.

- **Fathers’ reflection forms.** To get frequent input from fathers, the SIRF team developed two short web-based surveys, one about recruitment experiences and one about program service experiences. The former was fielded only with fathers in the outreach cluster because this was the only cluster that tested changes to recruitment activities. Appendix B provides more information about the questions, the fielding strategy, and the response rate. Responses from fathers were analyzed and shared with program staff members at least once per learning cycle.
- **Staff members’ reflection forms.** Program staff members implementing the approaches also completed a reflection form. Approximately six staff members per program were asked to respond. Appendix B provides information about the response rate and questions. Responses were analyzed and shared with program staff members once per learning cycle. Peer mentors were also invited to complete reflection forms.
- **Semi-structured interviews with program staff members and fathers.** In spring 2022, the study team interviewed program managers, direct line staff members, peer mentors, and program participants from each program. Collectively, the study team interviewed 48 fathers, 8 peer mentors, and 70 program staff members. Notes from each interview with program staff members and peer mentors were recorded in an Excel template and organized by theme. Audio recordings of program participant and peer mentor interviews were transcribed and analyzed using an inductive approach to identifying themes using NVivo, a qualitative analysis software.⁹

At the end of each cycle, the study team compiled information for each program from nFORM, the SIRFboard, and reflection forms into a reflection packet. The SIRF team and program staff members reviewed this information on a phone call and jointly decided what to continue or change for the next cycle.

The SIRF team and participating programs used these tools throughout the implementation period with revisions made as needed during the cycle reflection phases. See Appendix B for more information about the data sources.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATING FATHERS

Using data from nFORM, Table 2 shows the characteristics of fathers who enrolled in the programs during the learning cycles and—where available—the characteristics of fathers

9. An inductive approach is an open-ended exploration of the data; code development is data-driven as opposed to deductive, which uses an a priori template of codes.

TABLE 2 Baseline Characteristics of Fathers in the SIRF Study

Characteristics (%)	SIRF Sample	Fatherhood FIRE Sample
Relationship status		
Married/engaged	24.9	26.8
Separated/divorced/widowed	22.0	23.6
Never married/single	53.2	49.6
Average age (years)	38.1	36.8
Race/ethnicity		
Hispanic	18.1	20.9
Black/non-Hispanic	57.1	39.6
White/non-Hispanic	17.3	29.2
Other/multiracial	7.5	10.3
Education		
None of the below	19.9	19.8
High school equivalency	18.4	20.1
High school diploma or GED	23.0	26.7
Vocational/technical certification	5.5	6.5
Associate's degree	5.2	4.4
Some college	18.3	16.3
4-year college or beyond	9.8	6.1
Currently working	54.4	47.6
Living situation		
Own home	6.8	9.9
Rent	50.8	37.5
Live at home with parents, relatives, or friends (rent-free)	16.8	15.9
Live in shelter, halfway house, or treatment center	15.3	18.7
Live on the streets, in a car, abandoned building, or another place not meant for sleeping	3.5	2.7
Other	6.8	15.3
Reason enrolled in the program		
Enrolled in the program to reach all three main goals	25.0	-
Enrolled in the program to reach at least one of the three main goals	86.1	-
Enrolled in the program to reach other goals	21.2	-
SIRF sample size (total = 1,386)		

SOURCES: SIRF sample: MDRC calculations using data from the applicant characteristics survey. Fatherhood FIRE sample: aggregate client demographic data from nFORM based on applicant characteristics surveys for all Fatherhood FIRE grantees completed from July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Fathers in the outreach cluster who did not enroll in the program did not complete the applicant characteristics survey and therefore are not included in the baseline sample.

enrolled across the full set of Fatherhood FIRE grantees.¹⁰ Fathers who enrolled in programs participating in SIRF are a diverse group in terms of age and education, although more than half were never married, more than half were Black, non-Hispanic, and more than half were renting the place where they lived. This information is consistent with what fathers said during semi-structured interviews. They described their children as having a wide range of ages. Some fathers were married and lived with their wives and children, while others said they were disconnected from their children’s day-to-day lives, and yet others were single parents. They also had experiences with various systems including past involvement with the criminal legal system, the child welfare system, and experiencing homelessness and living in shelters. Some fathers also talked about their struggles with alcoholism, substance use, and domestic violence.

In terms of why they enrolled in the program, Table 2 indicates that nearly all fathers mentioned one of the three focal areas addressed by fatherhood programs—being a better parent, improving personal relationships, and finding a job or a better job—although only 25 percent mentioned all three.

This is consistent with information from semi-structured interviews and SIRFboards for fathers in the outreach cluster. According to the SIRFboards, more than half of fathers enrolled to be a better parent and more than half wanted to improve personal relationships. Likewise, about half of fathers who provided their reflections during learning cycles indicated they wanted help with parenting (56 percent) or to strengthen relationships with others (48 percent), although 42 percent indicated that they liked what staff members told them about the program as a main reason for enrolling. Several fathers who participated in semi-structured interviews also expressed a desire to be a more understanding father or a better father and to improve their relationship with their coparent, and they saw the program as a way to achieve these goals. One father said, “When they [the fatherhood program] said parent support, and they helped you to communicate with your partner, I really wanted that because I really want me and my relationship with my child’s mother to be better.” Some fathers also mentioned that the offer of monetary incentives or food was compelling.

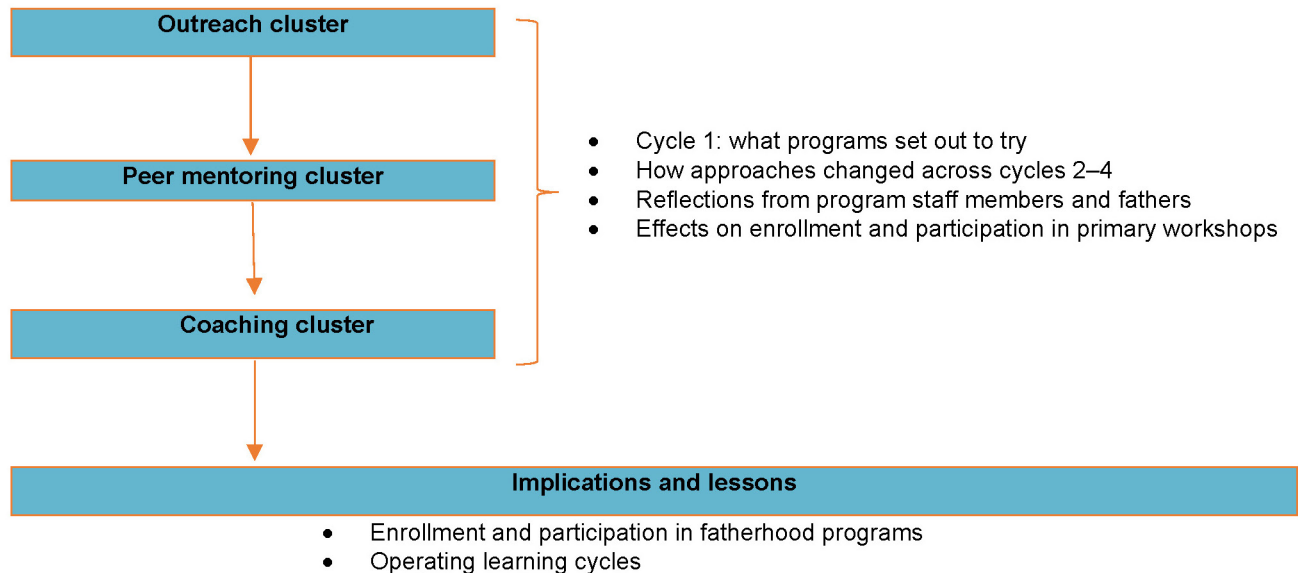
Looking across the two columns of Table 2 indicates that there are differences between fathers in the 10 programs that participated in SIRF learning cycles and fathers in other Fatherhood FIRE grantee programs, but the two groups are generally similar.

10. Appendix C provides information on a larger set of characteristics (Appendix Table C.1) and characteristics for the three clusters. Appendix Table C.2 compares the characteristics of the ease-of-intake group and the case management intake group for the outreach cluster. Appendix Table C.3 shows baseline characteristics for the mentor-initiated and father-initiated groups in the peer mentoring cluster. Appendix Table C.4 compares the characteristics of fathers in the coaching cluster to those in the outreach cluster since—as discussed elsewhere in the report—the effects of the coaching cluster were estimated by comparing participation outcomes to the outreach cluster.

ROAD MAP OF THE REPORT

Figure 1 provides an overview of the content of the remainder of the report. The next three sections discuss what happened in each of the three clusters, starting with the outreach cluster, turning next to the peer mentoring cluster, and ending with the coaching cluster. Each section begins by discussing what happened during the first cycle and then describes how programs changed their approaches during the year of learning cycles. The sections then discuss the reflections of program staff members and fathers from semi-structured interviews and the SIRF reflection forms. Finally, each section presents estimates of the effects on fathers' enrollment and participation in primary workshops. The report concludes with implications for improving participation in fatherhood programs and lessons on working with fatherhood programs to conduct rapid learning cycles.

FIGURE 1 Road Map to the Remainder of the Report



Outreach Cluster

The three programs in the outreach cluster wanted to recruit more potential program participants and encourage them to enroll in the program and attend at least one primary workshop. To achieve these goals, programs worked with the SIRF team to develop vision statements for what they hoped to accomplish. The vision statements are provided in Appendix D. Each program then undertook a two-pronged strategy to achieve its vision. In one prong, they tried to broaden their recruitment sources and improve recruitment messaging to interest more fathers in their programs. In the second prong, they compared two approaches to intake to see which resulted in more fathers enrolling and attending primary workshops. Because SIRF did not have consistent information over time or across programs to rigorously assess the effectiveness of the recruitment strategies, this section focuses on the approaches to intake. Box 1 provides an overview of the recruitment approaches, and Appendix K provides more details about them and how they changed across learning cycles.

Once programs identified potential participants, they tested two intake strategies for encouraging them to enroll in the program and attend workshops.

- **Ease-of-intake:** One strategy is based on the theory that fathers are more likely to enroll if they understand the benefits of attending the workshops. This led to an approach called ease-of-intake in this report, which was intended to highlight messages about the information and benefits of workshops. An example of this approach is reminding fathers of the date and time of an enrollment appointment.
- **Case management intake:** The other strategy was based on the theory that fathers are more likely to enroll if they understand or experience the other supportive services the program provides and have more personalized interactions with staff members. This theory led to an approach called case management intake in this report, which began by providing the opportunity for fathers to participate in case management services prior to the first workshop. The case management services focused on understanding the fathers' needs and helping them obtain services in the community to meet those needs, which included food and housing, transportation, substance use, mental health, and employment services. An example of this approach is reminding a father that attending a case management session will help him reach a goal in which he previously expressed interest.

To allow SIRF to gain rigorous evidence about whether one approach was more effective than the other, each program randomly assigned fathers to the two intake approaches.

Box 2 summarizes the intake strategies the programs set out to test, how those changed across the cycles, reflections from program staff members and fathers, and estimated effects on enrollment and fathers' attendance at primary workshops. Details on each follow the box.

Box 1. Recruitment Across Learning Cycles

Prior to implementing SIRF, programs in the outreach cluster recruited fathers using methods such as posting flyers, attending community events, spreading the information by word of mouth, and developing relationships with other community organizations. In cycle 1, programs did outreach at community locations such as farmers' markets or at events held by referral partners, used radio and web advertising, and developed marketing materials that featured graphics showing a father as a superhero and that described participation in the program as a "hero's journey."

Over the cycles, programs experimented with social media as a recruitment tool. For example, each program developed multiple messages for use on social media and systematically varied messages to see which ones attracted the most interest. An example of a Facebook post used by the Chautauqua program is shown below, with additional examples in Appendix K. Programs also experimented with using "boosted" posts, which are paid on social media.

With enhanced data collection, the programs gathered information about why fathers were interested in their services, the number of times a post appeared on a screen, and the number of times people interacted with their posts. This information helped them improve their messaging over time. For example, based on this information, all three programs increased the use of photos and stories from program participants and staff members. One program had success by having staff members engage with fathers who responded to boosted posts through Facebook direct message conversations.



Over the cycles, the programs also tried cultivating new referral sources and deepening relationships with existing partners. To get referrals from a broader set of partners, programs developed relationships with additional organizations and sent email reminders to referral partners. By tracking fathers' recruitment sources, they could change their approach across cycles. These efforts resulted in greater diversity of referral sources over time, with large increases in referrals from community providers, social media, and program alumni.

Fathers who participated in semi-structured interviews reinforced the idea that fathers took different paths to get to the programs. For example, one father's mother saw something about the program on Facebook, others saw flyers around town, one described being ordered by a judge, and several noted that they heard about the program from past participants.

Box 2. Program Intake in the Outreach Cluster

Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.; Montefiore Medical Center (with Bronxworks); Passages

Question: Can new intake approaches improve rates of fathers' program enrollment and initial attendance?

Research Design

Random assignment was used to test two approaches to bring participants from first contact to program enrollment and attendance.

- The “ease-of-intake” approach focused on the benefits of program workshops.
- The “case management intake” approach focused on the supportive services provided by the program.

Learning Cycles in Practice

- Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc. and Montefiore Medical Center (with Bronxworks) conducted four cycles; Passages: Connecting Fathers and Families conducted three cycles because they made bigger changes from cycle to cycle.
- Cross-cycle changes included changes in messaging, points of outreach, and mode of communication.

Staff Members' Feedback

- Staff members disagreed about the value of the two approaches, but acknowledged both had benefits.

Ease-of-Intake Approach

- Staff members thought this approach might increase enrollment by focusing on the value of workshops.
- They wondered whether the increase in enrollment would carry over into continued participation.
- They were concerned fathers would not have enough information about the program at orientation.

Case Management Intake Approach

- Staff members liked that the approach distributed the enrollment process over time, although it was sometimes challenging to schedule multiple appointments.
- Resolving some case management needs early might discourage fathers from attending workshops.

(continued)

Box 2. (Continued)

Fathers' Feedback

- Fathers in both intake groups described their enrollment experiences as being straightforward.
- Fathers had positive things to say about program staff members.
- Fathers noted the importance of program staff members following through on what they said they would do.

Effects on Enrollment and Participation in Primary Workshops

- More fathers in the ease-of-intake group enrolled and attended at least one workshop than fathers in the case management intake group.
- Differences were concentrated in one program, which enrolled cohorts more often than other programs and had a larger contrast between the ease-of-intake and case management intake approaches.
- Differences in program retention between the two groups were small for all three programs.

CYCLE 1: WHAT PROGRAMS SET OUT TO TRY

At the start of cycle 1, the SIRF team trained program staff members on both intake approaches. For the ease-of-intake group, staff members were trained to focus on information about workshops and the benefits of the workshops. For the case management intake group, they were trained to use tailored messages and to provide information on the benefits of case management services. Training also covered the differences in the assistance the programs should provide to fathers in the two groups. Staff members were to limit short-term assistance to fathers in the ease-of-intake group to critical or emergent needs, instead previewing that goals and longer-term needs would be addressed after fathers began attending workshops. In contrast, staff members could provide assistance with goals and longer-term needs during the intake period for fathers in the case management intake group.

To support staff members with executing the two intake approaches, the SIRF team developed scripted talking points in collaboration with program staff members. During training, staff members roleplayed using the scripts. Each program also developed different processes for intake for the ease-of-intake and case management groups, as shown in Table 3. Each program typically began with a conversation where a staff member pitched the program and attempted to get the father to agree to enroll, but the programs varied in the types of follow up they provided for the rest of the intake period. The Chautauqua and Passages programs used similar processes for the two groups, but they used different messaging and different types of assistance in the interactions. The Montefiore program used two different processes: a single group orientation for the ease-of-intake group, and two one-on-one intakes for the case management intake group.

TABLE 3 Planned Intake Contacts in Cycle 1 for Programs in the Outreach Cluster

Organization	Ease-of-Intake	Case Management Intake
Chautauqua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation using talking points about benefits of the workshops Enrollment interview to complete intake forms and check for pressing needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation using talking points about benefits of case management Enrollment interview to complete intake forms, check for pressing needs, and start a personalized action plan
Montefiore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation using talking points with basic information about the workshops Reminder call to attend orientation Group orientation (one day/time) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation using talking points with increased personalization Reminder calls for each step Clinical coach interview Vocational coach interview
Passages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation using talking points with basic information about the workshops Weekly follow-up calls with program reminders and to follow up on attendance barriers, if any 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial conversation using talking points with increased personalization and to begin needs assessment Weekly follow-up calls with program reminders, to follow up on needs, and to begin individualized development plan

HOW PROGRAMS ALTERED THE APPROACH ACROSS CYCLES 2–4

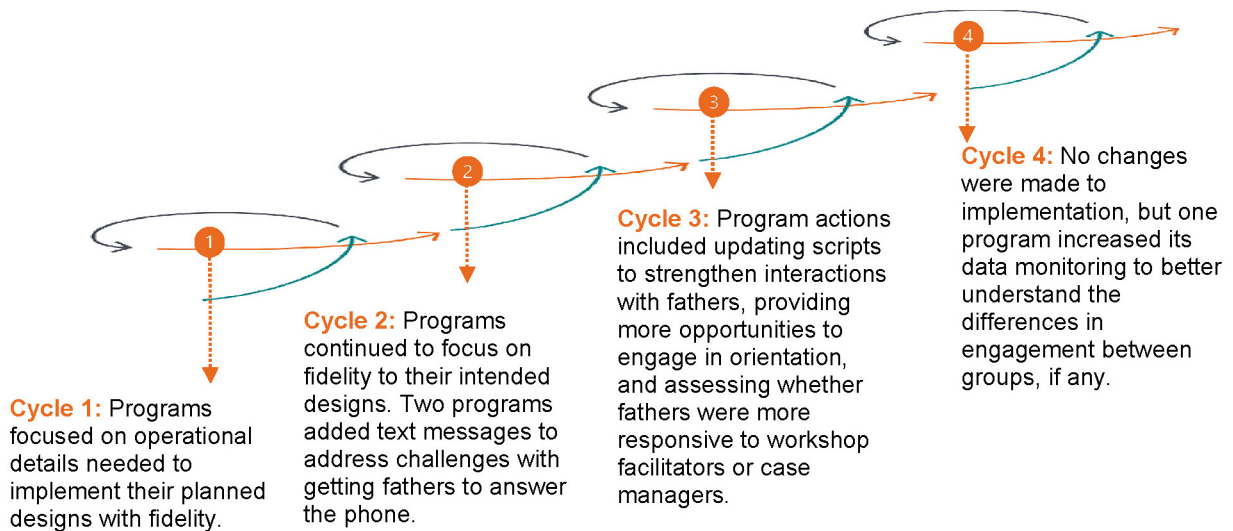
Across the learning cycles, the Chautauqua and Montefiore programs refined the approaches that they developed for cycle 1 while the Passages program made more substantial changes, which resulted in slightly longer learning cycles. As a result, the Chautauqua and Montefiore programs had four learning cycles and Passages had three. Across the cycles, the programs tried different intake messages, modes of communication, number and types of intake touchpoints, and staff members responsible for communication with fathers. Figure 2 summarizes the changes that programs made across cycles. The changes for each program are summarized below. Appendix Table E.1 provides more details on how the approaches changed across cycles while Appendix F provides quantitative information on implementation in the outreach cluster.

Chautauqua

In cycle 1, the Chautauqua program did not have as many contacts with fathers as they had planned. The program did not have enough staff members to follow up with all fathers because many fathers were recruited too close to the start of workshops to allow for planned follow-up contacts, and because many fathers did not answer phone calls. In later cycles, therefore, Chautauqua made three main changes:

- 1. Eliminated plans for follow-up contacts for the ease-of-intake group:** This allowed the program to focus staff members' limited time on offering fathers in the case management intake group the opportunity for case management between enrollment and the start of the workshops.

FIGURE 2 Outreach Program Cycles Overview: Intake



NOTES: Chautauqua and Montefiore programs had four cycles, while Passages had three cycles.

For each Learn-Do-Reflect cycle illustrated in this figure, teal represents Learn; grey represents Do; and orange represents Reflect.

- 2. Added a text message to the case management intake group:** A text message was added in cycle 2 asking fathers to contact the program after an unanswered phone call. They also sent a text message to follow up with a father after phone calls reminding him of the date and time of his orientation.
- 3. Added a question to the case management intake group script to assess for pressing needs:** With the goal of providing more support to fathers in this group in cycle 3, the program chose to be more direct in asking whether fathers had any pressing needs such as jobs, transportation, or housing that affected their daily living.

Montefiore

Montefiore revised its approach across cycles to respond to several challenges observed in cycle 1. First, program staff members found it challenging to schedule two intake meetings—one with a clinical coach and one with a vocational coach. The program also had too few staff members at the group orientations to support all fathers in the ease-of-intake group with the intake process over video conferencing. They therefore focused on increasing fidelity to the implementation plan in cycle 2. In cycles 3 and 4, they made two refinements:

- 1. Offered more opportunities for orientation for fathers in the ease-of-intake group:** In cycle 3, the program offered multiple orientation times to make it easier for participants to complete their enrollment. They also added staff members to provide better support to fathers at the group orientations.

- 2. Updated talking points for the case management intake group:** In cycle 4, the program updated scripts used during intake sessions with clinical and vocational coaches to reinforce the structure of the program, emphasize expectations and benefits, and address how to handle various reactions fathers may have during the intake sessions. These changes were intended to encourage more fathers to enroll and help them with developing their personal goals for the program.

Passages

Passages staff members reported that, during cycle 1, they had difficulty getting fathers to answer the phone or engage in conversation after the first call for both groups. They also thought using scripts caused the conversations to feel artificial. They particularly reported challenges with doing a needs assessment during the first intake contact. Therefore, Passages made four main changes over the cycles:

- 1. Discontinued use of the needs assessment and goal-setting tools:** The case management intake group did not have case management sessions in the intake period in later cycles, although personalization continued to be used.
- 2. Varied the use of scripts:** In cycle 2, the program eliminated scripts at intake for both groups to give staff members more flexibility during conversations. Scripts were reintroduced in cycle 3 to provide structure and consistency, but they were the same for both groups.
- 3. Added text messages:** The Passages program kept an initial phone conversation during intake in cycles 2 and 3, but they used text messages for subsequent follow up. In cycle 2, fathers in the ease-of-intake group could receive up to six messages while fathers in the case management intake group could receive up to nine messages. Texts for the ease-of-intake group focused on providing basic program information and reminders. Texts for the case management intake group were similar but were tailored to the father's goals. Fathers in this group also received a message from the workshop facilitator welcoming them to the program. Both groups also received an initial text from an outreach worker, but this was eliminated in cycle 3 because program staff members did not find it to be effective.
- 4. Used workshop facilitators to communicate with ease-of-intake fathers:** Staff members thought text messages were useful in reminding fathers about the program, but that conversations could better engage fathers and build rapport. Therefore, in cycle 3, facilitators who led the workshops tried to contact fathers

There were also text messages reminding me of the times and dates prior to the process, and after the process, and during the process. There were multiple ways that they were communicating via phone call, email, and text messages. They [messages] were definitely personalized and made me feel comfortable on a certain type of level because most places don't usually text you. I like that personal touch.

-Passages Participant

during the pre-workshop period. For the ease-of-intake approach, all phone calls and texts came from the workshop facilitator. The case management intake approach continued to use the case manager for pre-workshop contacts.

REFLECTIONS FROM STAFF MEMBERS AND FATHERS

Reflection forms and semi-structured interviews provided information on staff members' and fathers' reactions to what happened during the learning cycles in the outreach cluster.

Staff Members' Reflections

Staff members misunderstood the intent of the scripts. Program staff members apologetically indicated they did not read scripts verbatim but used them more as talking points. Although this implies that they thought they were doing something against expectations, the study team intended for the scripts to be used as guides. More concerning, however, was that some staff members did not always use different messaging for the two groups, which suggests that the two groups did not always have distinct experiences.

Some staff members had mixed feelings about the use of text messages. Some thought using text messages made it difficult to build a relationship with the father, but others thought fathers were more likely to look at the message. Staff members were also concerned that the text scripts looked as if they were sent from an automated system. The messages also did not require a response from the recipient, which some saw as an issue.

Program staff members had different opinions about the value and effectiveness of the ease-of-intake and case management intake approaches. Some preferred case management intake because it distributed the burden of completing intake over multiple days or weeks. However, they also noted that it could be challenging to schedule multiple intake appointments. Although several staff members thought case management intake would result in fathers attending more primary workshops, others were concerned that resolving some case management needs before fathers started attending workshops might discourage them from participating in workshops. Regarding the ease-of-intake approach, staff members were concerned that fathers did not have as much information about the program when they attended orientation. For example, fathers in the ease-of-intake group did not know about different components and requirements (like surveys). One staff member noted the importance of making sure the fathers got the details of the program before they committed to it. Some program staff members noted that the ease-of-intake approach may be a way to increase enrollment, but they questioned its ability to influence fathers' persistence in the program.

Fathers' Reflections

Fathers described their enrollment experiences as being easy and straightforward. This was true for both the ease-of-intake and case management intake groups. One father was par-

ticularly reflective in noting how staff members helped him through the intake experience, which entails filling out extensive paperwork,

But I will say that [staff person] and [staff person], they made the process a little bit softer... And they kind of helped me to get past some of the emotions and feelings that I [was] experiencing while filling out the paperwork... it made me think and reflect on some of the experiences of my past, my childhood coming up. So it brought a lot of emotions to the surface.

Fathers had positive things to say about the staff members they interacted with. One father said, “I think they [staff] do a great job of making dads feel comfortable. They’re understanding. They got a good tone of voice. They listen.” Another father mentioned,

[Staff person] really connected with me as far as some of their own personal experiences. We connected, we bonded and that also made me feel good about the program because it wasn’t strictly a personal thing with them as far as a paycheck, I’m just doing my job. They gave me the [impression] that they genuinely care for me as a human being.

Fathers noted the importance of program staff members following through on what they say they will do for enrollees. One father noted, “Everybody in the program do what they say. So it’s like you’re going to build trust with them. I feel like they force you to build trust with them because they do what they say.” Another father had a similar sentiment and shared, “One thing I can say that would make it better is, if you promise somebody something, make sure you stand by what you can get done with that person.”

EFFECTS OF THE INTAKE APPROACH ON ENROLLMENT AND PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

As noted earlier, fathers who were recruited by programs in the outreach cluster were assigned at random to the ease-of-intake approach or the case management intake approach. Table 4 compares the two groups of fathers on the three outcomes of interest for the outreach cluster: whether they enrolled in the program, whether they attended at least one workshop session, and the percentage of primary workshop hours that they attended.¹¹ The table shows results across all cycles and for each cycle.

Fathers in the ease-of-intake group were more likely to be enrolled than fathers in the case management intake group. Across all cycles, 40.2 percent of fathers in the ease-of-intake

11. Results in Table 4 are not adjusted for baseline characteristics because the sample includes fathers who were recruited by the programs, but baseline data were not collected until fathers enrolled in the program. Since a higher proportion of fathers enrolled in the ease-of-intake group than in the case management intake group, baseline data were available for a larger proportion of the ease-of-intake group.

TABLE 4 Effects of Outreach Strategies on Enrollment, Initial Engagement, and Retention

Outcomes	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	Difference	P-Value
Enrolled (%)				
All cycles	40.2	35.6	4.6*	0.093
Cycle 1	43.3	36.6	6.7	0.276
Cycle 2	40.0	36.3	3.7	0.481
Cycle 3	38.4	32.2	6.2	0.149
Cycle 4	40.9	43.1	-2.1	0.786
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	37.0	32.8	4.2	0.115
Cycle 1	41.7	34.4	7.4	0.224
Cycle 2	35.0	32.6	2.4	0.642
Cycle 3	34.9	29.8	5.1	0.223
Cycle 4	39.8	40.3	-0.5	0.949
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	28.6	28.1	0.5	0.831
Cycle 1	36.7	29.8	6.9	0.226
Cycle 2	26.6	29.8	-3.2	0.498
Cycle 3	25.9	24.1	1.8	0.623
Cycle 4	28.4	34.2	-5.7	0.412
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 1,268)	630	638		
Cycle 1 (total = 258)	127	131		
Cycle 2 (total = 350)	160	190		
Cycle 3 (total = 500)	255	245		
Cycle 4 (total = 160)	88	72		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent. Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

group enrolled compared with 35.6 percent of fathers in the case management intake group.¹² This finding is consistent with the theory underlying the ease-of-intake approach, which is to focus on information about and benefits of the primary workshops. Although results for

12. This difference is statistically significant at the 10 percent level. The team used the 10 percent significance level because it viewed SIRF as a study whose findings would lead to further research about the effectiveness of approaches that appeared effective.

individual cycles are not very precise, it is noteworthy that the overall result differed in the last cycle, when the case management intake group was slightly more likely to enroll than the ease-of-intake group. This might reflect refinements to the approaches implemented by the programs across cycles.

Among fathers who were recruited by the programs, those in the ease-of-intake group were more likely to attend at least one primary workshop than those in the case management intake group. Once fathers enrolled in a program, most attended at least one primary workshop. Since the ease-of-intake group enrolled in greater numbers, they also attended at least one workshop in greater numbers. Looking across all cycles, 37.0 percent of fathers in the ease-of-intake group attended at least one workshop compared with 32.8 percent of fathers in the case management intake group. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

The two groups attended a similar percentage of primary workshop hours.¹³ Overall, the ease-of-intake group attended 28.6 percent of primary workshop hours compared with 28.1 percent for the case management intake group. Moreover, the results vary somewhat across cycles, which further suggests that any differences in retention between the two groups were small. These results may reflect the focus of programs in the cluster on changing what they did during recruitment and intake.

Differences in participation between the two groups were concentrated in the Montefiore program. Results by program are shown in Appendix Tables I.1 through I.3. The difference in enrollment rates between the ease-of-intake group and the case management intake group was about 10 percentage points for the Montefiore program but close to zero for the other two programs. Results were similar for attending at least one primary workshop. It is unclear why Montefiore's program produced greater differences between the ease-of-intake group and the case management intake group. One possible explanation is that Montefiore started cohorts more frequently than the other programs, which meant fathers might not have had to wait as long between recruitment, enrollment, and starting to attend workshops.¹⁴ Another possible explanation is that Montefiore introduced greater differences than the other programs in how they approached the two groups, for example, having fathers in the case management intake group meet with both a clinical coach and a vocational coach.

13. Appendix Table J.1 shows results for several additional measures of retention.

14. At Passages, during the pre-workshop period, the ease-of-intake group interacted primarily with workshop facilitators, who were men. By contrast, the case management intake group met with their case managers, who were women. Lack of differences in enrollment and workshop participation between the two groups at Passages might suggest that neither the staff member's role or gender had an important influence on program participation.

Peer Mentoring Cluster

The four programs in the peer mentoring cluster wanted to improve fathers' initial engagement and retention in their programs. As they developed implementation plans for their peer mentoring programs, staff members worked with the SIRF team to identify a program vision statement for what they hoped to achieve. Among the four programs, there were common themes of aspiring to make fathers feel “empowered,” “supported,” “encouraged,” or “included,” so that they would attend the first fatherhood workshop and continue to participate over time. Complete program vision statements are provided in Appendix D.

As noted earlier in the report, fathers who enrolled in the programs were assigned to either father-initiated peer mentoring or a mentor-initiated peer mentoring. Fathers in both groups could contact their mentor at any time, but only in the mentor-initiated approach did the mentors reach out to the fathers, which they did at strategic points throughout the program.

Box 3 summarizes the peer mentoring approaches the programs set out to test, how those changed across the cycles, reflections from program staff members and fathers, and estimated effects on fathers' attendance at primary workshops. Details on each follow.

CYCLE 1: WHAT PROGRAMS SET OUT TO TRY

At the start of cycle 1, the SIRF team trained program staff members on implementing the peer mentoring programs. Each program was asked to identify program alumni willing to share personal stories and experiences with the program and to serve as mentors and a mentor coordinator to lead mentor onboarding, communicate regularly with mentors to provide outreach instructions, and gather feedback from mentors about their outreach to mentees. The SIRF team also provided resources that program staff members and mentors could use. Tools included a guide to recruiting mentors, a guide to help mentors document their outreach, and a customizable mentor agreement form that outlined the roles and responsibilities of both the program and the mentor. Mentors could sign the agreement to indicate their understanding and commitment to the role. The team also provided a template of an overview of the mentoring program, which could be given to program participants.

For cycle 1, three programs chose past program participants to be mentors. Prior to SIRF, the City of

I think with the mentors it's the bridge after class. It is like having your teacher reach out to you after school, or having someone, like a friend in class, reach out to you after school. Having someone reach out to you after and say, how are you doing, I think it's a good touch to the program because it's more of that personal touch. The mentor is like, hey, this guy was part of the program and if I was able to do it then you can do it as well.

-City of Long Beach Mentor

Box 3. The Peer Mentoring Cluster

Action for Children, Center for Family Services, City of Long Beach, and Connections to Success

Question: Can hands-on alumni mentoring improve fathers' initial program attendance and continued participation over a more hands-off approach?

Research Design

Random assignment was used to compare two approaches to alumni mentoring.

- The father-initiated approach allowed participants to reach out to an assigned mentor.
- The mentor-initiated approach allowed fathers to contact their mentor and also allowed mentors to reach out to mentees at designated points in the program.

Learning Cycles in Practice

- All four programs implemented four learning cycles.
- Cross-cycle changes focused primarily on adjusting the number of mentor-mentee contacts, as well as the mode of communication.

Staff Members' and Mentors' Feedback

- Some staff members thought peer mentoring resulted in better engagement of fathers in the mentor-initiated group, but others did not.
- Some staff members thought adding a mentoring relationship might overwhelm or burden fathers.
- Some mentors never spoke to fathers and thought fathers did not know who the mentors were.
- Some staff members and mentors did report strong mentor-participant connections.

Fathers' Feedback

- Fathers had mixed experiences with mentor-initiated outreach. Some felt sufficiently supported by their case manager. Others thought having a fellow father as a peer mentor was a useful resource.
- Both groups reported good and trusting relationships with staff members. Both found certain program topics most helpful, such as those about strengthening their relationships with their children. This suggests the two groups did not have meaningfully different program experiences.

Effects on Enrollment and Participation in Primary Workshops

- The father-initiated group had better rates of workshop participation than the mentor-initiated group. This suggests that the mentor-initiated approach discouraged fathers from participating, perhaps because the additional attempted contacts were unwelcome.

Long Beach program had an alumni group where program completers and current participants met informally without staff members, which was a source to recruit some mentors. Programs run by Center for Family Services and Connections to Success also had a pool of past participants to recruit from, but the Action for Children program did not. Instead, that program used mentors who were community members and fathers. Once mentors were chosen, programs trained them on the requirements and expectations of their role, including the frequency of contacts.

Peer mentors had a wide range of personal, educational, and professional experiences, including experience with incarceration, homelessness, and struggles with substance use and mental health. Many mentors described having volatile relationships with their coparents and had experience with the child welfare system and being single parents. Peer mentors also had a variety of educational experiences. For example, at least one held a bachelor’s and master’s degree in social work. They also had a variety of jobs during regular business hours including working for the Department of Child and Family Services, a large school district, a recovery center, and a prison.

The programs gave fathers in both groups their mentors’ contact information during or shortly after orientation. In the mentor-initiated group, mentors were trained to try to contact fathers at specific times during the program, which are shown in Table 5. For three of the programs, the outreach was intended to be most concentrated early in the programming process. All four programs intended for mentors to reach out to fathers after missed sessions, and three programs had contacts related to milestones, such as job attainment or qualifying for a program incentive. For fathers in the father-initiated group, there were no planned contacts after orientation, except for City of Long Beach, where fathers were with a mentor in a group setting two times during the 10-week program.

TABLE 5 Mentor Contacts for the Mentor-Initiated Group in Cycle 1

Action for Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mentor attends orientation ■ 5 scheduled contacts (weekly during programming) ■ Contacts after missed sessions ■ Contacts in advance of approaching milestones
Center for Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mentor attends orientation ■ 4 scheduled contacts (after enrollment, week 1, week 2, and workshop completion) ■ Contacts after missed sessions
City of Long Beach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mentor attends orientation ■ 4 scheduled contacts (before session 1, week 2, week 8, and workshop completion) ■ Mentor attends week 8 workshop to encourage fathers to become mentors ■ Contacts after missed sessions ■ Contacts after milestones achieved
Connections to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mentor attends orientation ■ 4 scheduled contacts (before session 1, week 1, week 2, and week 3) ■ Contacts after missed sessions ■ Contacts after milestones achieved

Mentors who were interviewed described communicating with the fathers assigned to the mentor-initiated group primarily through phone calls or text messages; face-to-face interaction (either in person or through video conferencing) was more limited and this varied across the programs. For example, at Connections to Success, mentors in some locations had more in-person communication while in others they had more virtual communication.

During the early months of SIRF, the programs had different experiences recruiting mentors. One program that existed prior to the 2020 grant cycle said finding mentors was not difficult. They looked for people who are working, good spirited, and in good standing with their family and the court. Other programs chose mentors based on their attendance in workshops, their willingness to share, and their reliability.

Nonetheless, programs had challenges recruiting and retaining mentors. For example, one program had trouble finding a Spanish-speaking mentor. Mentors disengaged for a variety of reasons, including life or job changes, loss of access to a phone, and turnover of the staff members with whom mentors had relationships at the program. In addition, programs had trouble getting timely information about mentor outreach attempts and contacts with fathers.

HOW PROGRAMS ALTERED THE APPROACH ACROSS CYCLES 2–4

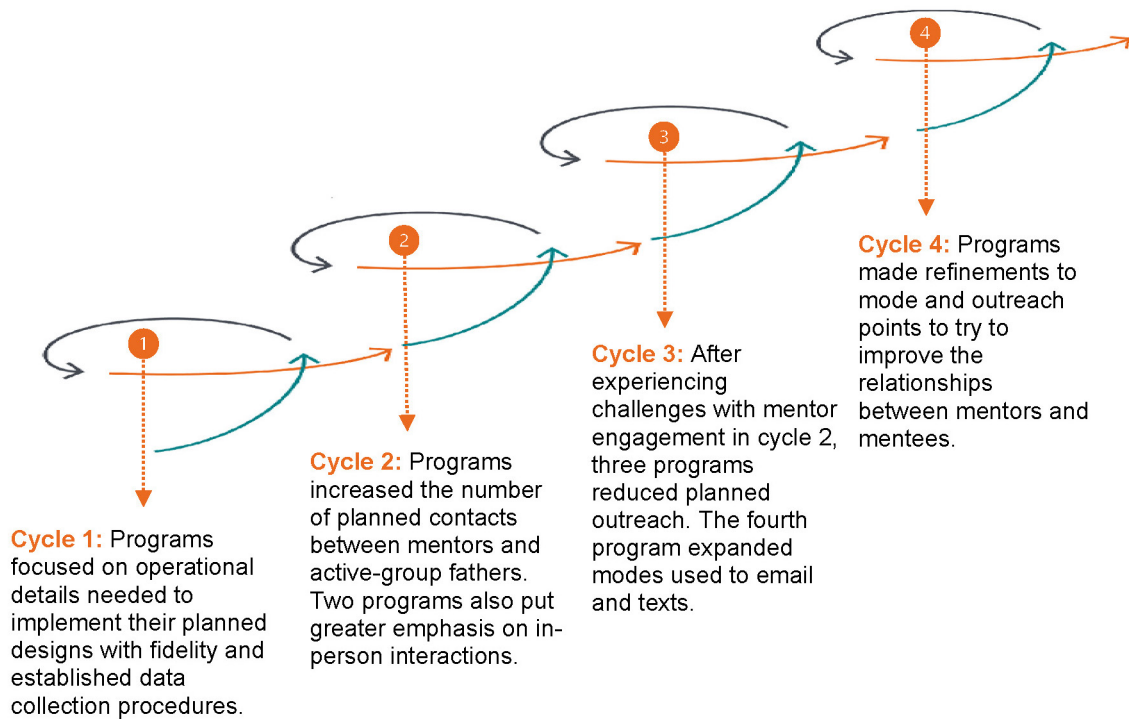
Although the programs kept the distinction between the father-initiated and mentor-initiated groups over the four cycles, they made refinements to each approach. Changes across cycles are summarized in Figure 3 and described in more detail in the text that follows. Appendix Table E.2 provides more details on how the approaches changed across cycles while Appendix G provides quantitative information on implementation in the peer mentoring cluster.

Action for Children

In cycle 1, mentors in the Action for Children program contacted fathers less often than planned and staff members reported challenges working with the mentors. Over the cycles, the program consequently made four main changes:

- 1. Used program alumni as mentors:** After using community members as mentors in cycle 1, the program identified alumni to serve as mentors in cycle 2.
- 2. Reduced the number of planned contacts for the mentor-initiated group:** In cycle 2, the program eliminated planned contacts after missed sessions and in advance of approaching milestones in order to focus on weekly contacts. In cycle 2, however, the program had trouble getting mentors to contact fathers as intended and new mentors needed to be identified. Since program staff members thought this was because mentors were focused on family and employment obligations, the program reduced the burden on mentors in cycle 3. The program no longer required mentors to attend orientation but instead used a video testimonial of mentors at the first workshop. The program also decreased planned mentor outreach for the mentor-initiated group from weekly to bi-weekly.

FIGURE 3 Peer Mentoring Program Cycles Overview



NOTE: For each Learn-Do-Reflect cycle illustrated in this figure, teal represents Learn; grey represents Do; and orange represents Reflect.

- 2. Varied mode of communication:** In cycle 2, peer mentorship was suspended in one cohort of fathers in a transitional housing facility because the facility restricted outside communication.¹⁵ In cycle 3, therefore, the program added email to the methods that mentors used. Mentors also increased their use of text messaging, and two text messages that they sent to the mentor-initiated group were scripted by program staff members. In cycle 4, the program added a message that gave mentees a “teaser” of the next upcoming topics during workshops.
- 3. Shifted the timing of planned contacts to the mentor-initiated group:** When mentors began attending workshops in cycle 2, the program shifted other contacts so they would take place after the mentor attended a workshop.

15. Cohorts that took place at this facility were subsequently removed from the SIRF team’s analysis because the study activities could not take place. Program participants were not allowed to own mobile devices and had limited access to facility telephones. Program staff members were not able to enter the facility for any face-to-face contact with residents. Contact between the mentors and program participants was limited to the virtual workshop sessions where it was not feasible to have one-on-one mentorship meetings.

- 4. Added a contact for the father-initiated group:** In cycle 4, the program sent one scripted text message before or during week 2 to participants in both groups encouraging them to contact their peer mentor. The goal of this communication was to get more fathers in the father-initiated group to contact a mentor.
- 5. Eliminated contacts after missed sessions:** Staff did not think reaching out after a missed session improved fathers' attendance. When they introduced preemptive teaser text messages in cycle 4, they removed this type of responsive contact for the mentor-initiated group.

City of Long Beach

At City of Long Beach, mentors completed most of the expected outreach with fathers in cycle 1, but the program wanted to help mentors stay on schedule and develop better relationships with fathers. It consequently made four main changes:

- 1. First increased and then reduced planned outreach to the mentor-initiated group:** In cycle 2, the program added one contact so that contacts were bi-weekly during workshops. However, two of the six mentors discontinued their participation. Because they were concerned about retaining mentors, in cycle 3 the program reduced outreach to three contacts and no longer asked mentors to do "missed session" outreach. The program also eliminated contacts after milestones except for an in-person contact at graduation.
- 2. Provided additional support to mentors:** The program provided mentors with \$50 if they completed training and provided a testimonial video, and they further emphasized the importance of their responsibilities.
- 3. Prioritized video calls:** In cycle 3, the program requested that mentors use phone calls and video calls and discontinue texting. In cycle 4, the program used video calls for the first two mentor contacts so that fathers could get to know their mentors better and distinguish them from other program staff members.
- 4. Limited the number of fathers a mentor would support:** In cycle 4, the program assigned no more than three mentees to each mentor. This was intended to reduce mentor burnout and build stronger mentor-mentee ties.

Connections to Success

For the Connections to Success program, mentors had little success contacting mentees in cycle 1. This led to three main changes:

- 1. Refined timing of mentor outreach:** Unrelated to SIRF, the program shortened cohorts in cycle 2 from three weeks to two weeks. To help mentors contact mentees, the program changed the timing of contacts in cycle 2 and eliminated one contact in cycle 3. The program also tried a pre-orientation contact in cycle 2 but discontinued it because there was not enough time to get information on participants to mentors before orientation. In cycle

4, the program eliminated outreach after missed sessions and milestones. Staff members acknowledged that this outreach had not occurred as planned in previous cycles in part because communication about missed sessions involved several people.

2. **Encouraged in-person interactions:** In cycle 1, mentors and mentees had in-person meetings at orientation at one of the program's locations, and these were added to the other locations in later cycles.
3. **Tried more methods of mentor engagement:** In cycle 2, program staff members had trouble getting mentors to attend workshop orientation and stay engaged. They thought this might be because mentors—who were recent program alumni—were focused on getting or holding jobs. To try to resolve these issues, the program asked prospective mentors in cycle 3 for their preferred mentoring schedule and prioritized engaging mentors who could provide more hours. The program also encouraged mentors to report back on outreach attempts by providing a \$50 gift card if all reports were provided in a timely fashion.

REFLECTIONS FROM PROGRAM STAFF MEMBERS, MENTORS, AND FATHERS

Based on information collected from reflection forms and semi-structured interviews, staff members, mentors, and fathers had several reactions to the peer mentoring approach.

Staff Members' and Mentors' Reflections

Program staff members and mentors provided a variety of reasons for the difficulty mentors had engaging fathers. One peer mentor noted that he had not heard from or spoken to some fathers, and he said one challenge was that fathers did not know who the mentor was and were skeptical when the mentor first got in touch. He reported that fathers said things such as, "Who are you? Why do you have my contact information?" As noted earlier, program staff members thought fathers had difficulty staying engaged with their mentors because their lives were unpredictable and they were building relationships with program staff members, especially case managers and workshop facilitators. See Appendix Tables G.1 through G.4 for more about contacts where the mentor's outreach attempt resulted in a connection with the father.

When they did connect with fathers, mentors shared their personal stories with them. One mentor described having open and honest conversations with fathers about his situation, "what we're ordered to do, and our current life situations, the struggles..." Another mentor described how mentors relate to fathers they work with,

Because so many of our situations are similar... I find that I relate on a multitude of levels, and I'm able to relate to them and they're able to relate to me...A lot of our household, when we were growing up as children, looked almost identical. A lot of just like the normal, everyday issues that people tend to face, you know, rent and groceries, and clothes.

Mentors reflected on how they supported fathers. One mentor described the importance of relating to the fathers,

I just serve as an example, somebody that the guys see every day, somebody that they can relate to. And I just try to help them get through the situations or problems that they might be having at that point in time.

One mentor described his role this way,

A lot of people think that as a father you're just supposed to be a breadwinner, a disciplinarian. And we're a whole lot more than those things...You can kiss your kids, you can hug your kids, you can attend plays, you can go with your kid to medical appointments, and you can take off a day if your kid is sick. There are these different roles that fathers never stepped into before. And I'm here to show them that you can take on this role and still be a man and still be a father.

Some program staff members expressed skepticism that mentors and fathers were building strong relationships. One suggested that the intervention focused too much on collecting data on the number of contacts rather than ensuring those contacts were substantive. This person described mentorship as a lot of consistent reminders between the mentors and fathers about the classes. Another staff person at the same program had a similar opinion, saying that the purpose of the contact did not seem like it was to help build a relationship.

Fathers' Reflections

Fathers described mentors as offering positive reinforcement and motivation throughout the program period. Two fathers said the mentor motivated them to try the program and helped them feel more comfortable knowing they are not alone. Another father described the motivational messages he received from his mentor, such as “you're doing a great job, keep up the good work, you only got a couple weeks left.”

Fathers valued having a fellow father with similar experiences as a peer mentor and resource. Most fathers described the mentors as being relatable and having empathy for their situations. They appreciated the positive reinforcement that the mentors provided and described contacts from the mentors as being motivating. However, there were also some fathers that did not remember having a peer mentor. In addition, as noted below, some fathers indicated their lack of interest in building a relationship with another person at each program when they already had the case manager and facilitator to support them.

Some fathers did not feel the need for a mentor. Some had an established support system or felt sufficiently supported by their case manager. For example, one father preferred to reach out to his case manager instead of the mentor. Fathers relied on case managers for various types of support, such as getting help securing identification, dealing with something related to the court system, or providing basic supplies. Fathers also described the motivation and general encouragement that program staff members provided them. See Appendix Tables G.1 through G.4 for more about contacts where the mentor's outreach attempt resulted in a connection with the father.

The father-initiated group did not have a very different experience than the mentor-initiated group. Fathers in both groups described similar feelings about their relationship with program staff members (generally reported as having good and trusting relationships) and the aspects of the program that most helped them meet their goals (program topics and help to strengthen their relationships with their children were top responses). See Appendix Table G.7.

EFFECTS OF PEER MENTORING ON PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

As noted earlier, fathers who enrolled in programs in the peer mentoring cluster were assigned at random to the mentor-initiated group or the father-initiated group.¹⁶ Table 6 compares participation for the two groups on two outcomes: whether fathers attended at least one primary workshop and the percentage of primary workshop hours that they attended. Results are shown across all programs and across all cycles and by cycle. Appendix Tables I.4 through I.7 show results by program. Appendix Table J.2 shows results for several other measures of program retention.

Fathers in the father-initiated group were more likely than those in the mentor-initiated group to attend at least one primary workshop and they attended a higher proportion of workshop hours. Looking across all cycles, 87.2 percent of the father-initiated group attended at least one workshop compared with 83.6 percent of the mentor-initiated group and the father-initiated group attended 71.3 percent of primary workshop hours compared to 64.1 percent of the mentor-initiated group.¹⁷ Only the second finding is statistically significant at the 10 percent significance level, however, suggesting caution in interpreting the data. In addition, higher participation for the father-initiated group was limited to cycles 2 and 3—but not cycles 1 and 4.

Given the differing views staff members across organizations shared about the mentoring-initiated strategies, fathers' relationships with other program staff members, and the implementation challenges described in the earlier sections, it is not surprising that the mentor-initiated approach did not result in greater participation than the father-initiated group. But it might also suggest that the active, mentor-initiated approach discouraged fathers from participating, perhaps because the additional contacts were burdensome.

16. Appendix Table C.3 compares the baseline characteristics of the mentor-initiated and father-initiated groups. A logistic regression was run using the baseline variables to predict research group status among fathers. The joint test indicates that the baseline characteristics are collectively related to whether the fathers were in the mentor-initiated or father-initiated group (p-value = 0.0624). However, results in Table 6 are regression-adjusted to account for those differences.

17. The proportion of fathers attending workshops is higher in Table 6 than in Table 4 because Table 4 includes all fathers who were recruited by programs in the outreach cluster while Table 6 is limited to fathers who enrolled in programs in the peer mentoring cluster.

TABLE 6 Effects of Peer Mentoring Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention

Outcomes	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Difference	P-Value
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	83.6	87.2	-3.6	0.342
Cycle 1	93.5	76.4	17.1	0.238
Cycle 2	86.1	96.7	-10.6	0.205
Cycle 3	78.8	86.1	-7.3	0.216
Cycle 4	84.2	87.8	-3.7	0.666
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	64.1	71.3	-7.2*	0.098
Cycle 1	75.6	69.7	5.9	0.683
Cycle 2	62.9	83.5	-20.6*	0.065
Cycle 3	58.5	68.2	-9.7	0.123
Cycle 4	70.0	68.6	1.3	0.900
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 394)	211	183		
Cycle 1 (total = 47)	24	23		
Cycle 2 (total = 92)	56	36		
Cycle 3 (total = 169)	89	80		
Cycle 4 (total = 86)	42	44		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

Estimates are adjusted by including baseline characteristics and indicators of which programs the fathers participated in.

Coaching Cluster

The three programs in the coaching cluster aimed to integrate a coaching approach into all case management interactions to improve fathers' initial engagement and retention. Coaching is an approach to case management that focuses on the father defining his goals and deciding how to achieve them. It is intended to help build strong relationships between the father and the case manager by better aligning services with fathers' needs and goals. By contrast, conventional case management is more likely to be staff-led and more directive.

Table 7 shows the components of the coaching approach. Beginning during their first meeting with fathers, case managers used open-ended questions, provided affirmations and reflections on the fathers' statements, encouraged fathers to talk about their needs, let the fathers lead the process of setting goals, and used motivational interviewing techniques.¹⁸

As programs developed plans for implementing coaching techniques, staff members worked with the SIRF team to identify a program vision statement for what they hoped to achieve through coaching. In their vision statements, programs hoped to make fathers feel "connected and supported" through case management interactions, to encourage fathers to "actively participate in case management," and to make fathers feel "comfortable and trusting with expressing to their case manager their fears, thoughts, and plans for their personal life." Complete program vision statements are available in Appendix D.

Box 4 summarizes the coaching approaches the programs set out to test, how those changed across the cycles, reflections from program staff members and fathers, and estimated effects on enrollment and fathers' attendance at primary workshops. Details on each follow.

CYCLE 1: WHAT PROGRAMS SET OUT TO TRY

To help programs begin the transition from conventional case management to the new coaching approach, coaching experts Richard Guare and Colin Guare of Executive Skills, LLC trained case managers and program leadership on coaching strategies and techniques, goal setting, and how to use the observation and reflection tools. The training encouraged case managers to use motivational interviewing and coaching techniques during every interaction with a father.

18. In motivational interviewing, the coach provides a menu of choices and information, inquires about the participant's perspectives, and encourages personal choice and responsibility. The goal is to create an environment of "supportive autonomy." See Williams (2002). Motivational interviewing is viewed as a particularly important technique when working with clients who are resistant to changing their behaviors. See Iannos and Antcliff (2013).

TABLE 7 Coaching Techniques and Definitions

Coaching Technique	Definition
Open-ended questions	Questions or statements that invite variety and depth of response from participants. Open-ended questions open the door to more words from the father than from the coach, as opposed to yes-no questions used to collect information or data.
Affirmations	Genuine, substantive, positive comments by a coach, often focused on a desirable attribute or strength the participant exhibited.
Reflections	Statements by a coach attempting to paraphrase the meaning of a participant's statement, not just its content. Accurate reflections of meaning are quintessential examples of coach empathy.
Summaries	Similar to reflections but drawing together several parts of a conversation and attempting to capture the sum of their meanings.
Asking for permission	Coaches always ask the father's permission to offer guidance or suggestions. If the father gives permission, the coach can move forward. If the father declines permission, the coach accepts this without judgment or protest and goes no further.
Cognitive rehearsals	The father is asked to create a mental image of the behaviors that they will engage in to complete their action step or reach their goal.

SOURCE: Richard Guare and Colin Guare, Executive Skills, LLC.

Cycle 1 was largely dedicated to helping case managers begin the transition from more directive case management to coaching. Throughout the first cycle, program staff members across the three programs worked on becoming more comfortable with coaching. Case managers used an observation form and participated in peer observations and self-reflections to track and reflect on the types and frequencies of coaching techniques they used during case management meetings. In cycle 1, all three programs implemented the coaching techniques during remote case management interactions with participants, either via phone or video conferencing.

Below is a discussion of each program's activities in the first cycle:

- The program at Children's Home & Aid of Illinois (Children's Home & Aid) integrated coaching into 12 expected case management contacts over the 12-week workshop period. The first coaching contact was planned for the first week of workshops. Contacts included text, email, phone, or video conferencing.
- The program at Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (Housing Opportunities Commission) integrated coaching into two expected case management contacts over the three-week workshop period. Contacts included phone or video. Case managers were also expected to use texts and emails to send workshop and case management meeting reminders and resources.
- The program at Jewish Family & Children's Service of the Suncoast, Inc. (Jewish Family & Children's Service) integrated coaching into eight expected case management contacts over the 12-week workshop period, beginning at program intake. Contacts included phone or video.

Box 4. The Coaching Cluster

Children’s Home & Aid of Illinois; Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County; and Jewish Family & Children’s Service of the Suncoast, Inc.

Question: Can a coaching approach to case management improve attendance at primary workshops?

Research Design

A nonexperimental design was used in which participation outcomes for fathers in the coaching cluster were compared to outcomes for fathers in the outreach cluster.

Learning Cycles in Practice

- Children’s Home & Aid implemented three learning cycles; Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County and Jewish Family & Children’s Service implemented four learning cycles.
- Cross-cycle changes focused on strengthening implementation of the coaching approach.

Staff Members’ Feedback

- Staff members’ perceptions of coaching were mixed. Some thought it made the fathers feel more at ease, but others thought some clients would benefit from more directive support.

Fathers’ Feedback

- Fathers’ feelings varied. Some said coaching helped them build a strong relationship with their case manager. Others thought they benefited from their workshop facilitator’s more directive approach.
- Despite their mixed reactions to the coaching approach, fathers reported having built strong connections and sharing personal information with their case managers.

Effects on Enrollment and Participation in Primary Workshops

- Coaching did not appear to improve fathers’ participation in primary workshops.

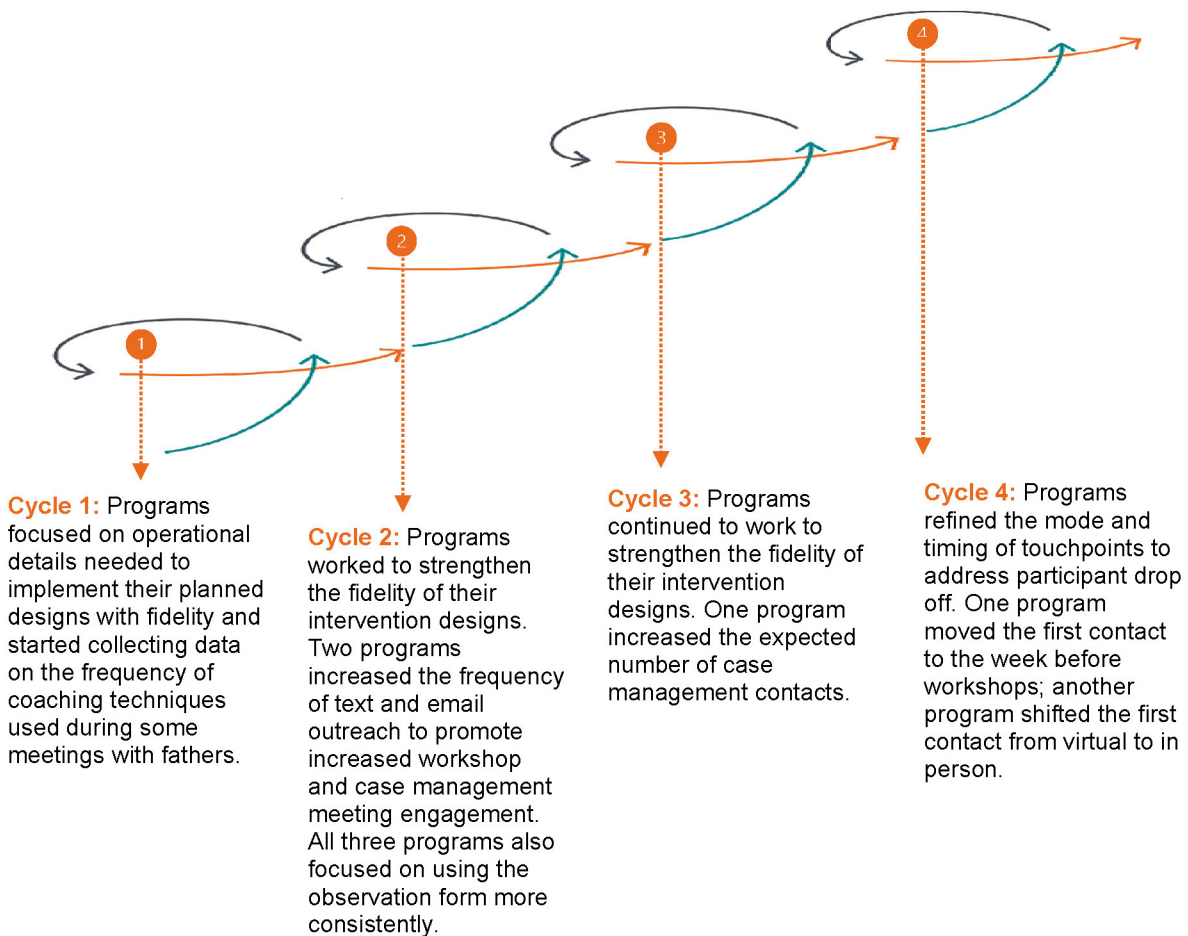
HOW PROGRAMS ALTERED THE APPROACH ACROSS CYCLES 2–4

The programs at Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission completed four learning cycles. The Children’s Home & Aid program completed three learning cycles but did not have a cohort structure, so fathers were enrolled on an ongoing basis.¹⁹ All

19. Although the Children’s Home & Aid program did not have a cohort structure, they assessed coaching implementation and made program changes on a cycle-by-cycle basis. Because fathers at Children’s Home & Aid also tended to participate for several months and attended the same workshops or workshop sessions more than once during the study, father outcomes cannot be analyzed across cycles.

three programs used coaching throughout the cycles, and changes in later cycles were intended to increase the number of opportunities for fathers to set goals and maintain progress, ensure fathers received adequate support, and strengthen the relationship between case managers and participants. Figure 4 provides a high-level overview of program changes across cycles, which are described in more detail below. Appendix Table E.3 provides more details on how the approaches changed across cycles while Appendix H provides quantitative information on implementation in the coaching cluster.

FIGURE 4 Coaching Program Cycles Overview



NOTES: The programs at Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission had four cycles, while the Children’s Home & Aid program had three cycles.

For each Learn-Do-Reflect cycle illustrated in this figure, teal represents Learn; grey represents Do; and orange represents Reflect.

Children's Home & Aid

The program at Children's Home & Aid focused on improving the implementation of coaching techniques. It did not change the frequency, mode, or timing of contacts. In cycle 2, the program focused on the length of case management sessions and the techniques being used in those sessions. Program staff members noticed discrepancies in the perceived implementation of techniques between case manager self-observations and staff member observations, so the program made one major change in cycle 3:

- **Added staff meetings with case managers:** In cycle 3, the program focused on diagnosing and addressing discrepancies by implementing staff meetings with the case managers to review their observation forms together.

Housing Opportunities Commission

The program at Housing Opportunities Commission varied the frequency and type of contacts. After case managers became more comfortable with the coaching techniques and observation form in cycle 1, the program at Housing Opportunities Commission made three main changes to strengthen coaching and increase father engagement:

1. **Increased text and email outreach:** In cycle 2, the program increased text and email outreach to fathers to try to increase workshop attendance and reduce the number of missed case management sessions. In response to several no shows to case management appointments, Housing Opportunities Commission also added group text contacts in cycle 3 to remind fathers about case management and workshop sessions.
2. **Increased number of case management contacts:** In cycle 3, the program increased the number of expected case management contacts from two to three.
3. **Changed the timing of the first expected case management contact:** In cycle 4, the program moved the timing of the first expected contact earlier because many enrollees were not attending the first workshop.

Jewish Family & Children's Service

The program at Jewish Family & Children's Service varied the frequency and type of contacts. Focusing on improving the implementation of the coaching techniques and increasing fathers' engagement, the program made two main changes:

1. **Increased outreach:** In cycle 2, the program added weekly texts after each workshop session and a contact every 10 business days to review goals by video or phone.
2. **Changed the mode of the first expected case management contact:** In cycle 4, the program shifted the first expected contact from virtual to in person to improve initial relationship building.

The programs at Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission also made changes to better integrate workshops and case management. In cycles 2–4, the program at Jewish Family & Children’s Service trained facilitators in coaching, co-located their case managers and facilitators in the same office, and held weekly staff meetings to connect the workshop curriculum to the coaching stance. In cycle 3, case managers at the program started attending orientation to introduce themselves to participants earlier and clarify expectations about the case management component sooner. Housing Opportunities Commission’s case managers began attending the first session of each workshop series in cycle 3 to better support fathers and introduce facilitators. Workshop facilitators also started reminding fathers to attend case management sessions and emphasized the importance of meeting with case managers, and case managers reminded fathers to attend workshop sessions.

Overall, fathers in the coaching cluster received an average of three weekly one-on-one contacts with someone at the program across all cycles. See Appendix Table H.1 for more details. Most contacts were in writing, with staff sending an average of 25 emails and 7 text messages per father as compared with an average of 2 phone calls and 1.5 virtual visits. According to the coaching model trainers, texts and emails are better than nothing, but it is difficult to build a relationship with someone over texts and email since the staff member cannot hear the father’s tone or see nonverbal cues, such as body language. Fathers experienced a higher volume of non-substantive contacts (less than 15 minutes or did not result in direct contact with the father or just a reminder contact) than substantive contacts, which means most one-on-one contact was short—another reason to question the ability of staff members and fathers to build strong relationships. The level of substantive contact appears to have changed some between cycles for fathers at Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission (see Appendix Table H.2 through H.5) with the level of in-person, phone, or virtual meetings declining across cycles and seemingly being replaced by more email contact. Throughout the study period program staff members, study team members, and the coaching model trainers wrestled with the question of whether email could be a viable approach to build relationships with fathers and a means through which the coaching stance could be implemented.

REFLECTIONS FROM STAFF MEMBERS AND FATHERS

During semi-structured interviews and reflections, staff members and fathers provided their perspectives on the use of coaching in the three programs.

Staff Members’ Reflections

Case managers worked on becoming more comfortable with coaching throughout the learning cycles. One case manager described the process of shifting to coaching,

I think we all at the beginning struggled a little bit, because we all came from the case management format of working... I was very much into resolving problems, you know, very straightforward and at times I would feel like I would be able to make a better decision for them [the father] to a certain

extent... A lot of those open-ended questions definitely change the whole scenario, especially the communication part, because you're allowing the client to think about what really is important.

Case managers thought coaching helped with relationship building. According to one case manager,

I think it [coaching] made them [the fathers] feel at ease, like I'm meeting them where they're at. There's no judgment at all in terms of how they want to participate in our program... Typically case management is like 'Oh, here's the problem. This is what you need to do...' It [coaching] kind of allows clients to relax and be themselves.

Case managers at all three programs used coaching techniques in at least some of their interactions. They used open-ended questions in every case management session that was observed and used affirmations in most interactions with fathers that were observed. Case managers frequently used summaries and reflections but did not use them in every meeting. These trends align with the expectation that case managers should use open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries very frequently. However, case managers used cognitive rehearsals less often, which was expected. Case managers sometimes felt uncomfortable incorporating cognitive rehearsals into meetings, only used a few cognitive rehearsals per meeting, and felt like the rehearsals might not be applicable in all situations. Asking for permission was expected to occur frequently but varied across the three programs and changed across cycles. Program staff said it sometimes felt awkward to ask permission multiple times during a session and that they asked for permission less frequently in sessions with fathers with whom they had a more established relationship. Across the three programs, case managers consistently used closed-ended questions and directive statements throughout the cycles, which signals challenges to implementing coaching as intended. Appendix L has more information on the frequency of use of coaching techniques.

Staff members challenged some underlying principles of the coaching model. For example, some argued that coaching was not appropriate for every interaction. One case manager said that open-ended questions helped with understanding client history and thought processes but that some clients needed directives. The case manager gave the example of a client experiencing homelessness and lacking money who needed to obtain employment and benefited from a more directive approach to suggesting jobs and scheduling interviews. Furthermore, some staff members noted that fathers would find the coaching style of interaction so different from what they were typically expecting from a case manager that it would be unsettling for them and potentially detrimental to their relationship.

Different types of staff members used different approaches when working with fathers. Two programs noticed that the approaches case managers and workshop facilitators used with fathers sometimes conflicted. Because the programs trained only case management staff in coaching, other staff members, such as facilitators, sometimes adopted the conventional case management approach by acting as proactive problem solvers rather than letting the father take the lead. For that reason, fathers who reached out to other program staff members often experienced a combination of coaching techniques and more conventional case management.

Fathers' Reflections

Fathers thought coaching helped with relationship building. One father described how coaching played out with his case manager,

She [the case manager] listens, and she offers her advice on it. She makes suggestions, but she never had told me, 'well you need to go do this.' She's given me the tools and she's given me the advice and access to the programs... she allows me to come to that decision myself. Going through all this stuff without telling me that I need to go from point A to point B before I go to point C... She gives me her advice, she helps me think about it, and she allows me to come to the conclusion that 'okay, well I can't go from point A to point C without going to point B first.' She puts the information out there.

Respondents to the reflection questions overwhelmingly indicated their belief that they built trusting relationships with program staff members and that the staff members helped them reach their goals. See Appendix Table H.7.

Fathers sometimes preferred a more directive style. At Jewish Family & Children's Service, some fathers sought out the facilitator rather than their case manager because they preferred the facilitator's more direct problem-solving style. This sometimes made it more difficult for case managers to engage and build strong relationships with fathers. It also undermined the coaching model by encouraging fathers to rely more heavily on staff members' opinions about how to solve problems rather than coming to their own conclusions about what might work best. At Housing Opportunities Commission, case managers and workshop facilitators often worked in silos. Each of Housing Opportunities Commission's workshop series (for example, fatherhood, financial literacy, men's health awareness, and career exploration) had a different facilitator, and these facilitators rarely interacted with the case managers, if at all. In these two programs where the roles of facilitator and case manager were filled by different staff members, fathers described having more interaction with the facilitators. One father described it as feeling more "natural" to go to the facilitator since he saw him once a week.

The coaching model trainers attribute some fathers' choices to seek out their facilitator to the structure of the programs. Programs focused on encouraging fathers to attend workshops, which made coaching seem like an optional program component. Furthermore, coaches were not the fathers' primary contact, nor did they function as a gatekeeper for services, so fathers could access all the resources they needed elsewhere. At Children's Home & Aid, case managers played a dual role as workshop facilitators and did not encounter this challenge.

Fathers at one program described their case managers as being relatable, good listeners, free of judgement, and accepting. One father described,

The very first conversation that I ever had with her [coach] was when I was getting ready to start the parenting class. I was very skeptical that I wasn't gonna get anything out of it. I also felt like people were telling me that I just was not a good father because if I'm gonna take a parenting class then obviously they don't think I'm a good father. Because only bad people that don't know how to be a parent have to take a parenting class. She [case manager] acknowledged my feelings on the matter and she asked me to just to give it a try, to go in with an open mind and just listen...because of [case

manager] acknowledging my feelings about how I felt, acknowledging my opinion, that right there alone gave me the building blocks that were needed to start trusting [case manager] and knowing that I had somebody that I could talk to if something hit the fan.

Where facilitators and case managers were different people, fathers had more interaction with the facilitators. However, this did not seem to stop fathers from connecting with and sharing personal information with their case managers. One father had a compelling statement about his relationship with his case manager,

I have had more case managers in my life than I can count. She's the first one I've ever trusted, ever. And it's all because she acknowledges me as the individual that I am. Plain and simple. I've never been made to feel like I was just another number that she had to work with. In my entire life with all the case managers I've worked with, she's the only one that's ever actually made me feel like a real individual.

EFFECTS OF COACHING ON PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

As mentioned earlier, the SIRF study team did not use random assignment to test the effects of coaching on program participation because it did not seem feasible for individual program staff members to use coaching with only some fathers, and programs were not big enough to randomly assign case managers to coaching or conventional case management. Therefore, to investigate whether coaching was affecting fathers' participation in workshops, participation outcomes for programs in the coaching cluster were compared with outcomes for programs in the outreach cluster.²⁰

Table 8 shows the results of the analysis for two outcomes: initial engagement and program retention. The results indicate the following:

Participation rates were similar for the coaching cluster and the comparison programs in the outreach cluster. Looking across all cycles, about 92 percent of fathers attended at least one primary workshop in both groups, and the two groups attended about the same proportion of workshop hours (73.8 percent in the coaching cluster compared with 73.6 percent in the programs from the outreach cluster). Participation rates were also similar for the two groups within each cycle. This result suggests that coaching did not produce the intended positive effects on program retention.²¹ Also, program participation for fathers in the coaching cluster did not increase across cycles, which would have been expected if programs improved their implementation of the coaching approach and those improvements had an increased effect on

20. As shown in Appendix Table C.4, there were differences in baseline characteristics between fathers in the two clusters, so the comparison was adjusted for fathers' baseline characteristics. In addition, Chautauqua was not included as a comparison program because it serves a rural area while the coaching programs and the other outreach programs are in urban areas.

21. Aggregate program participation data from nFORM for the 2022 grant year show that across FIRE grantees fathers attended on average 73 percent of primary workshop hours. Program participation in both the coaching and the outreach groups align with the average participation observed across FIRE grantees.

program participation. Since programs in the outreach cluster might have differed from those in the coaching cluster, however, it is possible that this comparison understates the true effect of a coaching approach on fathers' participation in workshops.

TABLE 8 Effects of Coaching Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention

Outcomes	Coaching Cluster^a	Outreach Cluster	Difference	P-Value
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	92.5	91.5	1.0	0.632
Cycle 1	96.2	94.0	2.2	0.575
Cycle 2	90.1	88.6	1.5	0.753
Cycle 3	92.9	92.0	0.8	0.827
Cycle 4	91.1	90.7	0.4	0.944
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	73.8	73.6	0.2	0.938
Cycle 1	79.4	78.1	1.3	0.843
Cycle 2	71.9	74.3	-2.4	0.684
Cycle 3	76.3	71.0	5.3	0.289
Cycle 4	69.2	64.6	4.5	0.583
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 872)	512	360		
Cycle 1 (total = 169)	97	72		
Cycle 2 (total = 215)	104	111		
Cycle 3 (total = 306)	169	137		
Cycle 4 (total = 167)	127	40		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

Estimates are adjusted by including baseline characteristics of fathers participating in the programs.

^aThe Children's Home & Aid sample is only included in "All cycles" because the program did not have a cohort structure, and fathers were enrolled on an ongoing basis.

Implications and Lessons for Fatherhood Programs

The goal of SIRF was to identify strategies that improve enrollment in, initial engagement with, and retention in fatherhood programs. The rapid learning design allowed the programs flexibility to adapt approaches to their own context and to iteratively improve them in response to performance. SIRF was also designed to identify whether these interventions—implemented with the flexibility and rigor of rapid learning methods—led to improvements in enrollment, initial engagement, and retention. This section summarizes the implications of study findings for improving fatherhood programs. Because SIRF is one of the first attempts to use a rigorous rapid learning framework with fatherhood programs, this section also discusses lessons for conducting future rapid learning studies with similar programs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPROVING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

The three clusters of approaches studied in SIRF—outreach, peer mentoring, and coaching—were selected in part because they represented promising approaches to addressing the challenges fatherhood programs face in getting men to participate in their services. For the outreach cluster, SIRF examined whether two versions of intake led to differences in all three outcomes: enrollment, initial engagement, and retention. For the peer mentoring and coaching clusters, where the enhanced approaches were delivered after enrollment, the study examined whether they led to improvements in initial engagement and retention.

Table 9 summarizes findings from the three clusters on the three participation outcomes. The results and their implications are discussed further below.

Effects on Recruitment

Programs in the **outreach** cluster began by expanding and strengthening their network of referral partners and by experimenting with social media to try to reach more fathers. Although SIRF did not rigorously study the effects of these changes, there is some evidence that using different recruitment strategies and messaging has the potential to increase the number of fathers being reached by fatherhood programs. In particular, two programs—Passages and Montefiore—experimented with boosting social media posts and both observed an increase in social media impressions for boosted posts. They also identified who enrolled in their program after observing social media content. For the Passages program, enabling fathers to respond to social media posts via direct messaging (rather than having fathers contact the program

TABLE 9 Summary of Effects of Approaches on Participation Outcomes

Outcome	Outreach Cluster	Peer Mentoring Cluster	Coaching Cluster
Enrollment	Ease-of-intake group more likely than case management intake group to enroll ^a	Not examined	Not examined
Initial engagement	Ease-of-intake group more likely than case management intake group to attend at least one primary workshop ^b	Father-initiated group slightly more likely than the mentor-initiated group to attend at least one primary workshop ^b	Fathers in the coaching cluster were about as likely as fathers in the outreach cluster to attend at least one primary workshop
Retention	Little difference between ease-of-intake and case management intake groups in percentage of workshops attended	Father-initiated group attended a higher percentage of primary workshops than did the mentor-initiated group ^a	Fathers in the coaching cluster attended a similar percentage of primary workshops as did fathers in the outreach cluster

NOTES: ^aDifference is statistically significant at the 10 percent significance level.

^bDifference is not statistically significant at the 10 percent significance level.

through other means) appeared to get fathers to contact the program after viewing the social media content.

Effects on Enrollment

Once fathers in the **outreach** cluster were recruited, they were randomly assigned to two different intake approaches. Combining results across the three responsible fatherhood and learning cycles, the ease-of-intake group approach resulted in a 4.6 percentage point increase in enrollment compared with the case management intake approach.

However, this result is driven by the Montefiore program. It is not entirely clear why Montefiore had greater success in increasing enrollment. Montefiore had a stronger contrast between their ease-of-intake process and their case management intake process than other programs. For example, the programs at Passages and Chautauqua relied primarily on messaging differences, emphasizing the importance of workshops or the value of other supportive services, depending on the intake group. By contrast, the Montefiore program asked fathers in the case management intake group to talk to two both a clinical and vocational coach. Additionally, the largest process difference between groups at Chautauqua occurred after enrollment. Montefiore might also have generated larger differences because its program started cohorts more often than the other two programs. This means that fathers had to wait less time between being recruited, enrolling, and attending primary workshops.

These findings suggest that fatherhood programs can reach more fathers through targeted social media and can improve enrollment through their intake approach. But the mixed results across programs suggest the effects are not universal. Some programs might require more tailoring

of intake strategies before they are effective. It also could be that outreach and intake alone cannot overcome the barriers to enrollment some programs face.

Effects on Initial Engagement

Among the clusters, differences in initial engagement were observed for both the **outreach** cluster and the **peer mentoring** cluster. For the outreach cluster, initial engagement was 4.2 percentage points higher among recruited fathers in the ease-of-intake group compared with those in the case management intake group. As with the impacts on enrollment, the impacts on initial engagement were driven by the outcomes at Montefiore. This suggests that the fathers who were more likely to enroll because of Montefiore's streamlined intake process were also more likely to attend their first workshop.

In the **peer mentoring** cluster, the mentor-initiated group had less initial engagement than the father-initiated group, although the reason is not immediately apparent. Feedback from mentors, staff members, and fathers suggests that in many respects the two groups had similar experiences. Fathers in the mentor-initiated group still tended to rely on program staff members instead of mentors for support, and fathers in both groups described their experiences similarly. The lack of contrast is not surprising since mentors struggled to meet outreach goals and to engage with fathers. Program staff members thought this was largely because the mentors had busy lives and many were spending time working and engaging with their families, areas that previously brought them to the programs as participants.

If the two groups had indistinguishable program experiences, there should have been no difference in initial engagement. However, some fathers in the mentor-initiated group indicated that contact from their mentors was not welcome and added to the burden that they faced. Some program staff members noted that fathers enter the program overwhelmed. The added burden of another relationship that fathers thought provided no benefit could have discouraged participation.

If this explanation is correct, future peer mentoring initiatives should ensure that mentors have the training, time, and devotion to connect with fathers and that these added interactions do not increase the burden on fathers. They also should explore the role of mentors in the context of other program services to ensure that the mentor-father relationship adds value to the father on top of other program resources. Finally, they should be sensitive to the desire of fathers to have an active relationship with their mentors. However, the difference between the two groups was not observed in every cycle, raising the possibility that the finding is a statistical anomaly, and further study would be warranted before the approach is used on a wider basis.

Programs in the **coaching** cluster failed to demonstrate an impact on initial engagement. This is consistent with the perceptions of some staff members, who questioned whether coaching was leading to a meaningful difference for fathers. Moreover, some fathers found the coaching-based conversations to be frustrating. While the lack of positive impact may suggest that the coaching mode is ineffective at increasing initial engagement, it also could be that staff lacked buy-in to the coaching model, or that improved fidelity to coaching procedures could improve experiences

for all fathers. In discussing these results, however, it is important to note that they are based on a comparison of outcomes between the coaching and outreach clusters rather than being based on a more rigorous method such as random assignment. The results should consequently be viewed with less confidence than those from the outreach and peer mentoring clusters.

Effects on Retention

Among the clusters, there was a difference in program retention in the **peer mentoring** cluster, where the father-initiated group attended a higher proportion of primary workshops than the mentor-initiated group. If true, this might be another indication that the mentor-initiated approach was burdensome in a way that discouraged fathers from participating. As with initial engagement, however, this difference was not observed in every cycle, raising the possibility that the finding is a statistical anomaly.

Neither of the other two clusters demonstrated gains in program retention. In the **outreach** cluster, the impacts observed on enrollment and initial engagement (largely driven by the experience at Montefiore) did not persist to increase average participation over the course of the program. In the **coaching** cluster, where the coaching stance frustrated some fathers, there was no evident effect on program retention.

Lessons Across Clusters and Outcomes

The SIRC learning cycles allowed program operations to be observed and refined in real time in response to feedback. The limited effects identified by SIRC highlight the challenges of implementing complex approaches that are designed to have a positive impact on fathers' behaviors.

It is possible that these approaches could be more effective with more time and additional refinements. Program staff members appreciated SIRC's intentional approach to designing and improving program procedures. The process enabled them to analyze program data and brainstorm refinements. With only four cycles available to design and test improvements, however, it would be premature to conclude that the approaches tested could never produce larger or more systematic changes in program participation. For example, most programs required at least one cycle to implement new procedures well. This left at most three cycles for programs to test improvements.

IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS FOR FUTURE RAPID LEARNING EFFORTS WITH RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS

The programs participating in SIRC might continue to test modifications to outreach, mentoring, and coaching beyond the study period. Indeed, a key goal of SIRC was to provide the skills and techniques needed to continue to test and learn after SIRC. Program staff members appreciated having the space to think analytically, examine data, and make thoughtful decisions about programmatic changes. One staff person noted that SIRC helped them to establish

a culture of using data for learning and innovating and one that recognizes that they can learn even when innovations do not produce their intended effects. As a result, programs may seek to incorporate similar analytic processes going forward.

One reason programs could fully participate in SIRC is that the study allowed each to hire a learning cycle manager to help facilitate the analytic processes. Learning cycle managers helped ensure data were available for analysis and that the cyclical analytic process was followed, which may have been difficult without a dedicated staff person. Learning cycle managers might stay on staff but with a different role in the organization. This may limit programs' ability to continue the rapid learning process after SIRC.

Rapid learning cycles incorporated into fatherhood programs in the future can benefit from key lessons learned through SIRC. One lesson is that SIRC may have benefited from dedicating more resources to training. Staff members need to be trained on the interventions being tested, and some interventions (like coaching) require substantially more training than others. Staff members also need to be trained on rapid learning processes, including tracking the necessary data, conducting periodic reflections, and designing refinements in response to both data and reflections.

The SIRC team approached this training in two ways. First, SIRC provided program staff members with training on rapid cycle testing and on their respective interventions before the first cycle started. Second, they viewed the first cycle as a pilot in which staff members would test the intervention procedures and the rapid cycle processes. The goal was for staff members to be comfortable with the intervention and the rapid cycle process by the second cycle.

Despite these training efforts, challenges persisted throughout the learning cycles. In some cases, staff members continued to struggle to implement interventions (like coaching) well. In other cases, it took multiple cycles for staff members to become comfortable with data collection procedures and with periodic reflections.

Future rapid learning efforts may need to dedicate even more resources to training. This could include longer start-up periods for the intervention and rapid cycle training. It may also include a pilot cycle with multiple opportunities to provide feedback to program staff members. Finally, future rapid learning efforts should plan for refresher training courses to occur during later cycles on both the intervention and rapid learning activities, such as data collection.

In addition to training, programs may be able to increase the quality of intervention implementation as well as compliance with rapid cycle procedures by enhancing communication with program staff members. As with any effort to implement new processes and procedures, rapid learning requires staff members to buy in. In many cases, front line program staff members expressed frustration at feeling disconnected from decisions made through SIRC. Many responsible fatherhood programs participating in SIRC did not include front line staff members as part of periodic learning cycle activities. To ensure staff member buy-in at all levels, future rapid learning efforts should incorporate a broader base of inclusion for learning and decision-making.

CONCLUSIONS

Fatherhood programs face numerous challenges in recruiting, enrolling, and retaining fathers. SIRF studied outreach, peer mentoring, and coaching approaches because program staff members, fathers, and others believed they could address some of those challenges. Moreover, some fatherhood programs already use versions of the intake and mentoring approaches studied in SIRF.

In the end, differences in outreach efforts at one program led to differences in program enrollment and initial engagement. Likewise, differences in how peer mentoring was implemented led to differences in program retention. However, those differences were not found across all clusters or all programs. Whether this suggests the strategies tested are ineffective or simply required more time for refinement is unclear.

Despite limited impacts on targeted participation outcomes, the SIRF experience may have created some benefits for current and future programs. Fatherhood programs in SIRF established and embraced data-driven improvement processes and can continue the test-and-learn approach with other, future program enhancements. Programs can continue refining these strategies or shift to test alternative approaches to improving enrollment, initial engagement, and retention. These and future rapid learning efforts can apply processes that worked well in SIRF, such as the reflection processes and peer learning opportunities, and would benefit from enhanced training, broader inclusion in the learning and decision-making process, and the continuation of a dedicated learning cycle manager.

APPENDIX

A

**Additional Information About Programs
Participating in SIRF Learning Cycles**

APPENDIX TABLE A.1 Profiles of Programs in the Outreach Cluster

Organization; Organization Type	Organizational Features	Program Name; Grant Status	Program Staffing	Target Number of Fathers Enrolled/ Year ^a	Primary Workshop Structure	Core Curricula	Additional context
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.; Community-based nonprofit	157 full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) within the organization 3,484 clients served annually	Fatherhood FIRE; Returning Responsible Fatherhood grantee	8 FTEs 2 part- time staff equivalents	210	6 weeks 2 days per week 2 hours per day 30 hours total	24/7 Dad (24 hours) Money Smart- Community (6 hours)	In addition to the community-based fathers served, the program enrolls approximately 130 incarcerated fathers per year. The program operates in a more rural area than the other SIRF programs.
Montefiore Medical Center, with BronxWorks; Community-based healthcare	40,000 FTEs within Montefiore More than 900 FTEs within BronxWorks 1.5 million clients served annually by Montefiore 60,000 clients served by annually by BronxWorks	HERO Dads; First-time Responsible Fatherhood grantee (BronxWorks is a third time grantee as subcontractor)	7 FTEs from Montefiore 7 FTEs from BronxWorks	350	4 weeks 4 days per week 1-2 hours per day (6 hours per week) of workshops 24 hours total	HERO Dads CORE (24 hours)	HERO Dads focuses on serving fathers who are non-custodial. The program is a collaboration between clinically trained staff from a health care organization (Montefiore Medical Center) and employment specialists from a multiservice community-based organization (BronxWorks); program services are based at BronxWorks, though outreach responsibilities are shared jointly between the two.
Passages: Connecting Fathers and Families; Community-based nonprofit	32 FTEs and 4 contractors 1,200 clients served annually post-pandemic	STEPS: Stabilizing Through Employment Parenting Skills; First-time Responsible Fatherhood grantee	14 FTEs	200	Day cohort: 4 weeks Up to 4 days per week, 2 hours per day Evening cohort: 7 weeks Up to 2 days per week, 2 hours per day	24/7 Dad (24 hours) Understanding Domestic Violence (3 hours)	Many enrollees have recently been released from incarceration.

NOTE: ^aIn some cases, program enrollment goals may be lower for Fatherhood FIRE grant year 1, due to a planned startup period. The figures in this table represent goals for grant years 2–5, when programs are expected to be operating at full capacity.

APPENDIX TABLE A.2 Profiles of Programs in the Peer Mentoring Cluster

Organization; Organization Type	Organizational Features	Program Name; Grant Status	Program Staffing	Target Number of Fathers Enrolled/ Year ^a	Primary Workshop Structure	Core Curricula	Additional Context
Action for Children; Community-based nonprofit	80 full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) across the organization 50,000 children and families	All in Dads!; First-time Responsible Fatherhood grantee	7 FTEs Some staff are former participants Recruiters are contracted	140 in year 1 240 in years 2–5	5 weeks ^b 2 days per week Between 2 and 2.5 hours per day 24 hours total	All In Dads! Fatherhood (20 hours) All In Dads! Financial Literacy (4 hours)	The organization has been involved in the fatherhood field since 2010.
Center for Family Services; Community-based nonprofit	1,000 FTEs across the organization 41,000 clients served annually	Framing Fatherhood; First-time Responsible Fatherhood grantee	8 FTEs	160	8 weeks 2 days per week 2 hours per day 32 hours total	Nurturing Fathers (32 hours)	Framing Fatherhood is a newly established program but builds on the organization’s long history of parenting programs.
City of Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services; Government	300 FTEs 456,062 city population	Fundamentals of Fatherhood; Returning Responsible Fatherhood grantee	6 FTEs Some partners provide key services such as career coaching and job placement	400	10 weeks 1 day per week 3 hours per day 30 hours total	Nurturing Fathers (30 hours)	Fundamentals of Fatherhood has an existing alumni network (the Fatherhood Action Network) associated with its fatherhood program.
Connections to Success; Community-based nonprofit	22 FTEs 761 clients served annually	Pathways to Success; Previous, but not current, Responsible Fatherhood grantee	18 FTEs	300	2 weeks ^c 5 days per week 6 hours per day 60 hours total	Pathways to Success (60 hours)	Connections to Success is the only non-Responsible Fatherhood grantee in SIRF.

NOTES: ^aIn some cases, program enrollment goals may be lower for Fatherhood FIRE grant year 1, due to a planned startup period. The figures in this table represent goals for grant years 2–5, when programs are expected to be operating at full capacity.

^bChanged to 6 weeks starting in January 2022.

^cIn October 2021, the program shifted from a 3-week/12-day primary workshop to a 2-week/10-day primary workshop. This change aligned with the beginning of SIRF learning cycle 2. These workshops are based out of the Kansas City and St. Louis locations. The Columbia, MO, location operates on a condensed, 1-week workshop schedule.

APPENDIX TABLE A.3 Profiles of Programs in the Coaching Cluster

Organization; Organization Type	Organizational Features	Program Name; Grant Status	Program Staffing	Target Number of Fathers Enrolled/ Year ^a	Primary Workshop Structure	Core Curricula	Additional Context
Children’s Home & Aid; Community-based nonprofit	795 full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) across the organization 4,000 children and families in Rockford and Bloomington	Thriving Fathers & Families First-time Responsible Fatherhood grantee	9 FTEs Staff members share case management and workshop facilitation roles	120	12 weeks 1 day per week 2 hours per day 24 hours total	Power of Fathers TIP (24 hours)	Children’s Home & Aid has substantial prior experience serving fathers. In addition to the primary workshop, each cohort (group of fathers enrolling together) is offered a 12-week secondary workshop. New cohorts begin approximately every six months.
Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, MD; County Government	More than 250 FTEs across the organization 15,000 families served annually	Fatherhood Initiative Program (FIP) Returning Responsible Fatherhood grantee Fatherhood FIRE grantee	3 FTEs Most staff members delivering Fatherhood initiative are not employees of the program but contractors including case managers, workshop facilitators, and learning cycle manager	356	3 weeks 5 days per week 3 hours per day 47 hours total	24/7 Dad (24 hours) Financial Literacy (6 hours) African American Health Program–Men’s Health Awareness Men (3 hours) Montgomery College’s Career (4 hours) Exploration Boot Camp	Fathers who have children 18-24 years old and are connected to the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County, MD (via waitlist, housing program, children in housing program, or mother/significant other in housing program).
Jewish Family & Children’s Service of the Suncoast, Inc. (JFCS); Community-based nonprofit	88 FTEs across the organization Nearly 2,000 clients served in 2020–2021	Ignite First-time Responsible Fatherhood grantee round	16 FTEs	250	12 weeks 1 day per week 2 hours per workshop 24 hours total	On My Shoulders (24 hours)	JFCS is a prior and current grantee through the Office of Family Assistance’s parallel Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education grant program.

NOTES: ^aIn some cases, program enrollment goals may be lower for Fatherhood FIRE grant year 1, due to a planned startup period. The figures in this table represent goals for grant years 2–5, when programs are expected to be operating at full capacity.

APPENDIX

B

Data Sources for SIRF Learning Cycles

nFORM

All Fatherhood FIRE (or Fatherhood Family-focused, Interconnected, Resilient, and Essential) grantees are required to use a management information system called nFORM (which stands for Information, Family Outcomes, Reporting, and Management) to collect and report performance measure data. The information collected via nFORM also includes data from the Applicant Characteristics Survey, a web-based survey administered via nFORM at intake to collect demographic information. Connections to Success (not a grantee) used nFORM to administer the Applicant Characteristics Survey and track fathers' participation in the primary workshops. The program did not use nFORM to log case management contacts. nFORM data was used to create outcomes and baseline covariates for the impact analysis.

SIRFBOARD

To supplement nFORM data, the study team developed an additional data collection tool, called SIRFboards, for program staff members to record information specific to the implementation of each cluster.

- The outreach SIRFboards collected information about random assignment status, recruitment sources, recruitment dates, and the father's interest in the program during the recruitment process. For the outreach programs, SIRFboards also collected data on social media posting activity. Programs updated information about their social media posts (such as the number of impressions) on a regular basis, however the programs did not use consistent methods to track information for different social media posts on the same outlet.
- The peer mentoring SIRFboards were used to log and track peer mentoring contacts, including information about the planned and executed contacts between peer mentors and fathers.
- The coaching SIRFboards collected information from the observation forms (described below), which documented the frequency with which case managers used coaching techniques during interactions with fathers.

All SIRFboards also included graphs and charts to present and summarize the data entered.

REFLECTION PACKETS

At the end of each cycle the study team analyzed each program using data from nFORM, SIRFboards, and reflection forms filled out by staff members, peer mentors, and fathers. The data were used to reflect on the context of the goals the programs set at the beginning of the cycle. The process culminated in each program deciding what they wanted to continue, change, discontinue, or add for the next cycle.

OBSERVATION FORMS

To gain information about program activities and to provide structure for program staff members to reflect on their activities, the study team developed observation forms for the outreach and coaching clusters.¹ The forms could be used by a supervisor observing a staff member working with a father or by a staff member reflecting on their meeting with a father. The observation form used by the outreach cluster collected information about the outreach tactics and approaches used in recruitment conversations. However, this form was not widely used as programs did not find it useful. The observation form used by the coaching cluster collected information about the techniques staff members used during their interactions with fathers and the key topics they discussed; programs gave input on the observation tool and modest changes were made to make it easier for them to use. Copies of the observation tool approved by the Office of Management and Budget can be accessed here: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewIC?ref_nbr=202104-0970-004&icID=246660.

FATHERS' REFLECTION FORMS

Fielding Strategy

The study team did not have contact information for the fathers in the program and therefore program staff members were asked to share web-based links (specific to each program, question topic, and random assignment group, if applicable) with currently enrolled fathers at predefined intervals noted in Appendix Table B.1. Program staff members were encouraged to share the links with fathers regardless of their level of participation (or lack of participation) in workshops. Fathers in the outreach cluster were eligible to receive two different sets of questions: one asking them to reflect on their recruitment and enrollment experiences and another asking them to reflect on their participation experiences. Fathers in the peer mentoring and coaching clusters were only eligible to receive the participation questions. Depending on the length of their workshop period, fathers in some programs were eligible to receive the participation questions at two different points in time during their workshop engagement period. Program staff members took different approaches to sharing the web-based links with fathers. Some used workshop time to have fathers respond while others texted or emailed the links for the fathers to respond on their own time.

Responses

All responses were anonymous and could not be traced back to specific program enrollees, so it was not possible for the study team to determine how many different fathers responded or if fathers answering questions multiple times indicated any changes in their responses over time. Unlike with survey efforts that involve a systematic approach to following up with non-

1. An observation form was not developed for the peer mentoring cluster because the study team, with input from program staff members, determined that observing peer mentoring activity was not feasible.

APPENDIX TABLE B.1 Summary of Father Reflection Form Fielding Strategy, by Program

Organization	Workshop Length (Weeks)	Outreach Questions Delivery Schedule	Participation Question Delivery Schedule
OUTREACH CLUSTER			
Chautauqua	6	Week 1	Week 3
Montefiore	4	Week 1	Week 3
Passages	4	Week 1	Week 3
PEER MENTORING CLUSTER			
Action for Children	5	N/A	Week 3 Week 3
Center for Family Services	8	N/A	Week 6 Week 2
City of Long Beach	10	N/A	Week 8
Connections to Success	2	N/A	Week 2
COACHING CLUSTER			
			Week 4
Children’s Home & Aid	12	N/A	Week 10
Housing Opportunities Commission	3	N/A	Week 2 Week 4
Jewish Family & Children’s Services	12	N/A	Week 10

NOTE: Based on their experiences sharing links with fathers, some programs adjusted their delivery schedule to better fit their program. The schedule above does not represent those adjustments.

sponders, the fathers’ reflection process was not set up in this manner because the study team did not have the fathers’ contact information and could not do the outreach themselves. The reliance on program staff members to field the fathers’ reflection links—among the many other tasks they were responsible for—may be a leading cause of the uneven distribution of responses collected, as shown in Appendix Table B.2.

Questions

Copies of the questions approved by the Office of Management and Budget can be accessed here: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewIC?ref_nbr=202104-0970-004&icID=246660.

APPENDIX TABLE B.2 Responses Collected from Fathers' Reflection Forms

Organization	Cycle 1		Cycle 2		Cycle 3		Cycle 4	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
OUTREACH CLUSTER—OUTREACH QUESTIONS								
Chautauqua	5	4	1	2	0	0	0	0
Montefiore	4	0	5	12	7	7	7	2
Passages	5	8	32	39	5	9	N/A	N/A
OUTREACH CLUSTER—PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS								
Chautauqua	8	9	5	3	2	2	3	3
Montefiore	5	1	6	12	10	3	3	0
Passages	0	4	1	16	0	9	N/A	N/A
PEER MENTORING CLUSTER—PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS								
Action for Children	5	2	8	10	9	9	3	1
Center for Family Services	0	0	2	4	0	0	0	0
City of Long Beach	0	0	18	11	13	12	7	8
Connections to Success	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	2
COACHING CLUSTER—PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS								
Children's Home & Aid						33		N/A
Housing Opportunities Commission		0		37		52		14
Jewish Family & Children Services		50		20		6		17

NOTES: For the outreach cluster, A represents the ease-of-intake group and B represents the case management group. For the peer mentoring cluster, A represents the mentor-initiated group and B represents the father-initiated group.

STAFF MEMBERS' REFLECTION FORMS

Fielding Strategy

In the final few weeks of each cycle, the study team sent email invitations from Qualtrics to about six staff members per program to respond to questions reflecting on the cycle and their progress toward achieving their goals. The staff members receiving this invitation were those closest to SIRF implementation and were agreed upon by the study team with input from each program. To improve response rates, the study team asked each learning cycle manager to remind the staff members to answer the questions and, in some cases, a second email reminder was sent.

The number of responses is shown in Appendix Table B.3.

APPENDIX TABLE B.3 Staff Members’ Reflection Form Responses Collected

Organization	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
OUTREACH CLUSTER				
Chautauqua	1	5	3	5
Montefiore	5	2	3	7
Passages	4	10	5	N/A
PEER MENTORING CLUSTER				
Action for Children	2	6	5	1
Center for Family Services	2	1	0	0
City of Long Beach	1	5	4	3
Connections to Success	4	4	4	3
COACHING CLUSTER				
Children’s Home & Aid	N/A	N/A	9	N/A
Housing Opportunities Commission	2	4	3	3
Jewish Family & Children Services	10	0	4	4

NOTES: Passages did not have a cycle 4.

Because fathers at Children’s Home & Aid tended to participate for several months and attended the same workshops or workshop sessions more than once during the study, fathers’ outcomes cannot be analyzed across cycles.

Questions

Copies of the questions approved by the Office of Management and Budget can be accessed here: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewIC?ref_nbr=202104-0970-004&icID=246660.

PEER MENTORS’ REFLECTION FORMS

Fielding Strategy

Using the same strategy as with the staff members’ reflection forms described above, peer mentors were emailed a web link to specific questions for them to answer about their experience as peer mentors near the end of each cycle. No follow-up was conducted with non-responders. Data from peer mentors are not presented in this report because of the low number of responses.

The number of responses is shown in Appendix Table B.4.

Questions

Copies of the questions approved by the Office of Management and Budget can be accessed here: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewIC?ref_nbr=202104-0970-004&icID=246660.

APPENDIX TABLE B.4 Peer Mentors' Reflection Responses Collected

Organization	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
PEER MENTORING CLUSTER				
Action for Children	0	0	1	0
Center for Family Services	1	0	0	0
City of Long Beach	1	0	0	2
Connections to Success	1	0	0	0

INTERVIEWS

In spring 2022, the study team conducted nine virtual visits and one in-person visit with the SIRF programs. Teams of two study team members conducted each visit; they also played technical assistance roles on SIRF, but they did not visit the programs they were most closely associated with. Copies of the questions approved by the Office of Management and Budget can be accessed here: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAViewIC?ref_nbr=202104-0970-004&icID=246660.

Program managers, direct line staff members, and program participants were interviewed at each program; peer mentors were also interviewed at the peer mentoring cluster programs. Collectively, the team interviewed 48 fathers, 8 peer mentors, and 70 program staff members. Each pair of study team members aimed to interview all program managers and direct line staff members who were actively engaged in the SIRF study. The learning cycle managers at each program in the peer mentoring cluster recommended peer mentors for the team to reach out to for interviews. Appendix Table B.5 shows the number of interviews by program for fathers, staff members, and mentors.

The study team took a multi-pronged approach to identifying fathers to interview. First, using information from nFORM or SIRFboards, the study team compiled lists of fathers (by nFORM ID) that were enrolled in either learning cycle 2 or 3; these were the learning cycles closest to the interview dates. These were selected because the team assumed that fathers with more recent connections to each program would be easier to engage. With this list as a starting point, the team devised a strategy specific to each cluster to narrow down the list of potential fathers to interview:

- **Outreach:** fathers were sampled based on their recruitment source, random assignment group, and degree of workshop completion. Selected interview candidates represented a range of recruitment sources, achieved different levels of workshop completion, and fell across the two random assignment groups.
- **Peer mentoring:** fathers were sampled based on their degree of workshop completion, level of contact with a peer mentor, and random assignment group.

APPENDIX TABLE B.5 Distribution of Interviews Conducted

Organization	Fathers	Staff	Peer Mentors
OUTREACH CLUSTER			
Chautauqua	6	6	N/A
Montefiore	3	6	N/A
Passages	3	10	N/A
PEER MENTORING CLUSTER			
Action for Children	1	6	1
Center for Family Services	8	5	2
City of Long Beach	8	7	3
Connections to Success	3	7	3
COACHING CLUSTER			
Children's Home & Aid	4	8	N/A
Housing Opportunities Commission	6	7	N/A
Jewish Family & Children Services	6	8	N/A

- **Coaching:** fathers were sampled based on their level of contact with the programs. Fathers receiving a range of contact—from little to no substantive contact to a significant amount of it—were selected as interview candidates.

Using the criteria outlined above, lists of fathers were provided to each program with the goal of interviewing up to 10 participants. The study team did not have contact information for fathers, so program staff members reached out to the fathers to gauge interest in participating in an interview. When program staff members were not able to connect with fathers on the list, they supplemented the list with fathers they knew to have diverse experiences with the program and were likely to be willing to be interviewed.

Interviews were largely one on one and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes each. Virtual visit interviews were conducted either over the phone or over Zoom.

Notes from each interview with program staff members and peer mentors were written up into an Excel template and organized by theme. These files were analyzed by report authors to pull out key points including commonalities across programs, differences in perspectives, or examples to supplement quantitative analyses. Audio recordings of program participant and peer mentor interviews were transcribed and analyzed using an inductive approach to identify themes in a qualitative analysis software (NVivo).

APPENDIX

C

Further Information on Baseline Characteristics of Study Participants

This appendix contains additional information on the characteristics of study participants when they completed enrollment in their responsible fatherhood program and completed the program's entry survey. The appendix includes the following tables:

- Appendix Table C.1 shows characteristics for all fathers who enrolled in the 10 programs during the learning cycles. It contains the same information as Table 1 in the body of the report but also includes some additional characteristics.
- Appendix Table C.2 compares characteristics for the ease-of-intake and case management intake groups in the outreach clusters. Note that the table refers to these groups as ease-of-intake and case management intake groups, respectively. Fathers completed the entry survey only after they enrolled in the program but were randomized before enrollment. Since more fathers in the ease-of-intake group enrolled than did fathers in the case management intake group, baseline characteristics are available for a larger proportion of the ease-of-intake group than for the case management intake group. One consequence is that characteristics might differ systematically between the two groups even if randomization was done correctly and resulted in comparable groups.
- Appendix Table C.3 compares characteristics of the mentor-initiated and father-initiated groups in the peer mentoring cluster.
- Appendix Table C.4 compares characteristics of fathers in the coaching cluster to fathers in the outreach cluster who enrolled. The table is provided since the effects of coaching were estimated by comparing program retention for fathers in these two clusters.

APPENDIX TABLE C.1 Baseline Characteristics of Fathers in the SIRF Study

Characteristics (%)	Fathers in the SIRF Study
Relationship status	
Married	20.1
Engaged	4.7
Separated	9.6
Divorced	11.3
Widowed	1.1
Never married/single	53.2
Average age (years)	38.1
Age (years)	
Under 25	6.4
25 to 34	34.7
35 to 44	34.6
45 or more	24.4
Race/ethnicity	
Hispanic	18.1
Black/non-Hispanic	57.1
White/non-Hispanic	17.3
Other/multiracial	7.5
Number of biological children	2.2
Education	
None of the below	19.9
High school equivalency	18.4
High school diploma or GED	23.0
Vocational/technical certification	5.5
Associate's degree	5.2
Some college	18.3
4-year college or beyond	9.8
Currently working	54.4
Actively looking for work	73.2
Living situation	
Own home	6.8
Rent	50.8
Live at home with parents or relatives	11.6
Live with friends	5.2
Live in shelter, halfway house, or treatment center	15.3
Live on the streets, in a car, abandoned building, or another place not meant for sleeping	3.5
Other	6.8

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE C.1 (Continued)

Characteristics (%)	Fathers in the SIRF Study
Reason enrolled in the program	
To learn about being a better parent	69.4
To learn how to improve personal relationships	50.0
To find a job or a better job	43.3
To meet a school requirement	7.2
Friends were coming	2.9
Spouse/partner asked to come	2.4
Parole/probation officer asked to enroll	3.4
A court ordered me to enroll	7.3
None of the above	8.3
Enrolled in the program to reach all three main goals	25.0
Enrolled in the program to reach at least one of the three main goals	86.1
Enrolled in the program to reach other goals	21.2
<hr/>	
Sample size (total = 1,386)	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the applicant characteristics survey.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Fathers in the outreach cluster who did not enroll in the program did not complete the applicant characteristics survey and therefore are not included in the baseline sample.

APPENDIX TABLE C.2 Baseline Characteristics of Fathers in the Outreach Cluster

Characteristics (%)	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	P-Value
Relationship status			0.727
Married	9.3	7.3	
Engaged	2.4	4.1	
Separated	10.2	12.7	
Divorced	10.6	10.0	
Widowed	0.4	0.9	
Never married/single	67.1	65.0	
Average age (years)	36.5	37.8	0.147
Age (years)			0.458
Under 25	8.8	8.0	
25 to 34	37.8	35.4	
35 to 44	33.5	30.5	
45 or more	19.9	26.1	
Number of biological children	2.1	2.2	0.604
Race/ethnicity		**	0.025
Hispanic	17.9	25.8	
Black/non-Hispanic	50.6	44.4	
White/non-Hispanic	20.7	24.4	
Other/multiracial	10.8	5.3	
Education			0.279
None of the below	25.7	27.9	
High school equivalency	22.9	25.2	
High school diploma or GED	22.1	21.7	
Vocational/technical certification	4.0	6.2	
Associate's degree	4.0	4.0	
Some college	19.4	11.5	
4-year college or beyond	2.0	3.5	
Currently working	39.1	31.2*	0.076
Actively looking for work	66.7	61.6	0.358

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE C.2 (Continued)

Characteristics (%)	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	P-Value
Living situation			0.124
Own home	2.8	7.6	
Rent	45.6	38.2	
Live at home with parents or relatives	11.1	16.0	
Live with friends	6.7	4.9	
Live in shelter, halfway house, or treatment center	19.8	20.9	
Live on the streets, in a car, abandoned building, or another place not meant for sleeping	4.0	3.6	
Other	9.9	8.9	
Reason enrolled in the program			
To learn about being a better parent	76.3	77.5	0.746
To learn how to improve personal relationships	54.5	53.3	0.785
To find a job or a better job	40.3	35.2	0.253
To meet a school requirement	2.8	3.1	0.837
Friends were coming	2.4	3.5	0.454
Spouse/partner asked to come	2.8	3.1	0.837
Parole/probation officer asked to enroll	2.8	4.4	0.332
A court ordered me to enroll	5.5	3.1	0.190
None of the above	7.5	6.2	0.562
Sample size (total = 480)	253	227	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the applicant characteristics survey.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

To assess differences between the research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables

APPENDIX TABLE C.3 Baseline Characteristics of Fathers in the Peer Mentoring Cluster

Characteristics (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
Relationship Status			0.735
Married	10.7	13.4	
Engaged	5.8	4.5	
Separated	9.7	10.1	
Divorced	9.2	12.3	
Widowed	1.5	0.6	
Never married/single	63.1	59.2	
Average age (years)	36.7	37.0	0.773
Age (years)			0.603
Under 25	6.2	8.9	
25 to 34	42.1	36.9	
35 to 44	29.7	32.4	
45 or more	22.0	21.8	
Number of biological children	2.2	2.2	0.905
Race/ethnicity			0.282
Hispanic	20.6	21.3	
Black/non-Hispanic	58.9	61.2	
White/non-Hispanic	14.8	9.0	
Other/multiracial	5.7	8.4	
Education		**	0.041
None of the below	19.2	23.6	
High school equivalency	22.1	11.8	
High school diploma or GED	26.4	21.3	
Vocational/technical certification	4.8	7.9	
Associate's degree	3.8	6.2	
Some college	19.7	21.3	
4-year college or beyond	3.8	7.9	
Currently working	54.4	55.7	0.797
Actively looking for work	79.8	80.5	0.908

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE C.3 (Continued)

Characteristics (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
Living situation			0.371
Own home	3.8	5.6	
Rent	44.0	47.5	
Live at home with parents or relatives	16.7	12.8	
Live with friends	6.7	5.0	
Live in shelter, halfway house, or treatment center	20.1	23.5	
Live on the streets, in a car, abandoned building, or another place not meant for sleeping	3.3	0.6	
Other	5.3	5.0	
Reason enrolled in the program			
To learn about being a better parent	71.8	73.3	0.731
To learn how to improve personal relationships	51.7	52.8	0.828
To find a job or a better job	46.9	31.7***	0.002
To meet a school requirement	3.3	3.9	0.776
Friends were coming	3.3	5.0	0.414
Spouse/partner asked to come	2.9	6.1	0.119
Parole/probation officer asked to enroll	8.1	2.2**	0.010
A court ordered me to enroll	11.0	15.0	0.240
None of the above	6.7	5.6	0.640
Sample size (total = 394)	211	183	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the applicant characteristics survey.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

To assess differences between the research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables.

APPENDIX TABLE C.4 Baseline Characteristics of Fathers in the Coaching and Outreach Clusters

Characteristics (%)	Coaching Cluster	Outreach Cluster	P-Value
Relationship status		***	0.000
Married	37.2	7.7	
Engaged	5.7	3.4	
Separated	7.7	10.9	
Divorced	12.7	9.4	
Widowed	1.6	0.9	
Never married/single	35.0	67.7	
Average age (years)	39.8	37.4***	0.000
Age (years)		***	0.001
Under 25	3.7	8.1	
25 to 34	29.0	36.1	
35 to 44	39.6	31.1	
45 or more	27.6	24.6	
Race/ethnicity		***	0.000
Hispanic	12.7	22.3	
Black/non-Hispanic	63.7	58.4	
White/non-Hispanic	16.3	10.6	
Other/multiracial	7.3	8.7	
Number of biological children	2.2	2.2	0.615
Education		***	0.000
None of the below	12.4	26.7	
High school equivalency	13.9	23.1	
High school diploma or GED	23.1	22.0	
Vocational/technical certification	5.3	4.2	
Associate's degree	6.5	3.9	
Some college	19.2	16.7	
4-year college or beyond	19.6	3.3	
Currently working	71.3	36.5***	0.000
Actively looking for work	83.3	76.0*	0.090

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE C.4 (Continued)

Characteristics (%)	Coaching Cluster	Outreach Cluster	P-Value
Living situation		***	0.000
Own home	10.2	3.9	
Rent	62.7	41.2	
Live at home with parents or relatives	7.5	16.0	
Live with friends	3.9	6.4	
Live in shelter, halfway house, or treatment center	5.7	17.9	
Live on the streets, in a car, abandoned building, or another place not meant for sleeping	4.3	4.8	
Other	5.7	9.8	
Reason enrolled in the program			
To learn about being a better parent	60.0	75.6***	0.000
To learn how to improve personal relationships	44.5	55.0***	0.002
To find a job or a better job	51.0	43.6**	0.032
To meet a school requirement	13.9	3.3***	0.000
Friends were coming	2.0	2.8	0.428
Spouse/partner asked to come	4.1	2.8	0.294
Parole/probation officer asked to enroll	1.8	4.7**	0.012
A court ordered me to enroll	5.9	4.2	0.260
None of the above	11.4	7.2**	0.041
Sample size (total = 872)	512	360	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from the applicant characteristics survey.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

To assess differences between the research groups, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and two-tailed t-tests were used for continuous variables.

APPENDIX

D

Program Vision Statements

Some programs used the same vision statement for all cycles. Other programs chose to modify their vision statements during the cycles. Where that occurred, original vision statements and updated vision statements are listed.

APPENDIX TABLE D.1 Program Vision Statements

Program	Vision Statement
OUTREACH CLUSTER	
Chautauqua Opportunities, Inc.	Dads will feel supported throughout the program, connect with other fathers, and meet the goals they set for themselves. The program will increase referrals from the court system, past graduates, and expand outreach to new locations. We will reach 600 dads and enroll 300.
Montefiore Medical Center	<p>Original vision statement: After intake, fathers will feel their goals have been heard and a pathway to achieve via participation in the program is feasible and tailored to them. As a result, they want to join in the next phase of programming and attend the group workshops.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 3: After intake, fathers will feel their goals have been heard and a pathway to achieve via participation in the program is feasible and tailored to them. As a result, they want to join in the next phase of programming and attend the group workshops as scheduled (fewer makeup sessions), and other activities, such as two types of one-on-one coaching and the peer support group.</p>
Passages Connecting Fathers and Families	<p>Original vision statement: Fathers will reference Passages’ marketing materials as a reason they reached out to the program and built a rapport and trust with Passages staff during pre-programming that lends to their decision to enroll and participate in programming. At least 60% of recruited fathers will enroll in the program.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 2: Fathers will reference Passages’ marketing materials as a reason they contacted the program and the rapport built with Passages staff during pre-programming as a reason they enrolled in programming. At least 60% of recruited fathers will enroll in the program.</p>
PEER SUPPORT CLUSTER	
Action for Children	<p>Original vision statement: Recruitment (getting fathers into the program): Peer mentors’ meaningful and relatable message will make fathers feel encouraged, valued, heard, safe, guided, supported, respected, included, and empowered, so that 85% of dads who attend orientation will participate in the first class.</p> <p>Engagement (getting fathers through the program): Peer mentors will make fathers feel encouraged, valued, heard, safe, guided, supported, respected, included, and empowered through meaningful and relatable contact so that dads complete the program.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 3: Through mentorship, fathers will be provided an extra layer of support, which will help them complete the All in Dads Program.</p>
Center for Family Services	<p>Original vision statement: Fathers should feel empowered, connected, and invested to overcome personal challenges to parenting through participating and collaborating with peer men.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 2: Fathers should feel empowered, connected, and invested to overcome personal challenges to parenting through participating and collaborating with peer mentor.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 3: Fathers should feel empowered, connected, and invested to overcome personal challenges to parenting through participating and collaborating with peer mentors.</p>

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE D.1 (Continued)

Program	Vision Statement
City of Long Beach	<p>Original vision statement: The coordination between a father’s Life Coach, Workshop Facilitator, Peer Mentor, and Career Coach can make fathers feel more supported in reaching their personal goals, completing the workshop sessions, feeling comfortable with program staff, and building a network within a father-friendly community. Together, these will help fathers make informed decisions for a plan they will stick with through completion. The goal of the SIRF peer support solution is to increase retention of fathers by 7% by Week 5 and by 3% by the end of workshop series completion in Week 10.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 3: The coordination between a father’s Life Coach, Workshop Facilitator, Peer Mentor, and Career Coach can make fathers feel supported in reaching personal goals, completing workshop sessions, feeling comfortable with staff, and building a network within a father-friendly community. Together, these will help fathers make informed decisions for a plan they will stick with through completion. The goal of peer support is to increase retention of fathers by 7% by Week 5 and by 3% by the end of workshop series completion in Week 10.</p>
Connections to Success	Before and during PPD, fathers will feel believed in, advocated for, hopeful, and included; 90% will complete PPD (attending 90% of workshop hours). [Note PPD is Personal and Professional Development, the program’s primary workshop series.]
COACHING CLUSTER	
Children’s Home & Aid of Illinois	Fathers will feel connected and supported through their case management touches (from recruitment through individual sessions) such that 80% of them will complete the workshop courses.
Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County	During the case management meetings, dads will trust and feel comfortable with expressing to their case manager their fears, thoughts, and plans for their personal life. Their trust will grow and enable dads to be more receptive of the recommendations of the case manager. Up to 80% of the dads will show progress in following up on the referrals given to them during the case management meetings.
Jewish Family & Children’s Service of the Suncoast, Inc.	<p>Original vision statement: Referred fathers are well-informed about the program, understand what they would get out of it, know why people are contacting them, are comfortable with their engagement in the program and talking about their role as a father, are excited to attend and socialize, and know who to connect with at the program. Fathers feel encouraged to actively participate in case management and have at least 8 contacts over the 12-week period, to stay engaged, and to set and continually work toward individualized goals, empowering themselves toward self-sufficiency.</p> <p>Vision statement updated in cycle 2: Participating fathers are well-informed about the program, understand what they would get out of it, know why people are contacting them, are comfortable with their engagement in the program and talking about their role as a father, are excited to attend and socialize, and know who to connect with at the program. Fathers feel encouraged to actively participate in case management and have at least 8 contacts throughout their participation in the program, to stay engaged, and to set and continually work toward individualized goals, empowering themselves toward self-sufficiency.</p>

APPENDIX

E

**Detailed Information on SIRF Strategies
Tested at the Program and Cycle Levels**

APPENDIX TABLE E.1 Outreach Cluster Strategies

Group and Outreach Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
CHAUTAUQUA				
Ease-of-intake group				
Received messaging during outreach and intake processes that emphasized the benefits of the workshops	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Initial contact from staff member to encourage father to sign up for program (script provided). Script emphasizes the benefits of workshops	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Follow-up contact to take place during a one-on-one intake interview (script provided)	Unable to implement strategy Strategy not implemented because of staffing shortage	Discontinued	Discontinued	Discontinued
Interview to complete intake forms and work on family development and action plans with the father (script provided)	Unable to implement strategy Strategy not implemented because of staffing shortage	Discontinued	Discontinued	Discontinued
Case management intake group				
Received messaging during outreach and intake processes that emphasized the benefits of case management	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Initial contact from staff member to encourage father to sign up for program (script provided). Script emphasizes the benefits of case management	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Text message after initial contact + follow-up message if staff member was not able to reach the father + reminder message of orientation date once father was reached		Added	Implemented	Implemented
Follow-up contact during orientation to take place at one-on-one intake interview to work on family development and action plans with the father (script provided)	Unable to implement strategy Strategy not successfully implemented in cycle 1	Changed The script was used in a one-on-one case management session occurring after orientation, between enrollment and the start of the workshop(s)	Implemented modified strategy	Implemented modified strategy

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE E.1 (Continued)

Group and Outreach Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
MONTEFIORE				
Ease-of-intake group				
Make it easy to enroll	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Initial contact from staff member to describe benefits of group workshops and schedule a start date (script provided)	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Follow-up contact to remind participant about impending orientation (script provided)	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Attend orientation 1–5 days after initial contact to complete domestic violence screening; complete surveys and intake paperwork and leave with workshop start date	Implemented	Changed Changes were made to ease tech challenges and find efficiencies, offer fathers opportunities to attend orientation in person	Discontinued Discontinued to add new strategy below	Discontinued
Allow participant to attend any orientation given in a month			Added	Implemented
Case management intake group				
Personalize enrollment	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Initial call from staff member to describe benefits of the program and the personalized development plan fathers would get (script provided)	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Complete welcome survey	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued Stopped use of survey. Instead, during recruitment staff members asked participants questions as they entered the participant's information into Salesforce	Discontinued
Meet with clinical coach (virtual for cycles 1–3, in person for cycle 4), including domestic violence screening; create personalized action plan based on need or interest	Implemented	Changed Scheduled more intake slots in evenings to accommodate fathers' schedules	Changed Staff decided to edit the script to strengthen the personalization aspect	Implemented modified strategy
Meet with vocational coach (virtual for cycles 1–3; in person for cycle 4); create personalized action plan based on need or screening	Implemented	Implemented	Changed Staff decided to edit the scripts to strengthen the personalization aspect	Implemented modified strategy
Attend orientation the day before workshop begins, complete any remaining paperwork or surveys	Implemented	Changed Offered fathers opportunity to attend orientation in person	Implemented modified strategy	Changed Added promotional video clips

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE E.1 (Continued)

Group and Outreach Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
PASSAGES				
Ease-of-intake group				
Cycles 1 and 2: Received messaging during intake that provided program information and benefits	Implemented	Implemented	Changed Similar messaging with some personalization from the workshop facilitator.	N/A
Intake call from the case manager describing program information and benefits (scripted talking points provided)	Implemented	Changed Discontinued use of scripted talking points	Changed Workshop facilitator made the call and added back scripted talking points (same for both groups and allowed for some personalization by staff)	N/A
Weekly follow-up phone calls from the case manager to check in with fathers and provide program reminders until workshops started	Implemented	Discontinued Discontinued using follow-up calls when fathers chose to add text messages		N/A
Text message after initial phone call that had different versions for when the father was reached and when he was not reached (text templates provided)		Added	Changed Texts sent from the workshop facilitator and some personalization added	N/A
Up to four follow-up text messages from the case manager after the initial phone call until workshops started (text templates provided). Messages sent approximately once per week		Added	Changed Workshop facilitator sent the texts and the text templates were updated, including by directing staff members to add some personalization to the messages	N/A
Case management intake group				
Cycle 1: received personalized support with needs and goals during intake		Added Messaging about the program with some personalization from the case manager	Implemented modified strategy	N/A
Intake call from the case manager describing program information and benefits tailored to the father's expressed needs and goals (scripted talking points provided)	Implemented	Changed Discontinued use of scripted talking points and focused on describing program information and benefits	Changed Added back scripted talking points (same for both groups and allowed for some personalization by staff members)	N/A

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE E.1 (Continued)

Group and Outreach Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
Use of the needs assessment tool with father on initial intake call	Implemented	Discontinued Discontinued use of needs assessment tool	Discontinued	N/A
Weekly follow-up phone calls from the case manager to check in with father, continue use of needs assessment tool, and begin to set goals until workshops started	Implemented	Discontinued Discontinued using follow-up calls when fathers chose to add text messages	Discontinued	N/A
Group text message from outreach worker connecting father to case manager after recruitment		Added	Discontinued Discontinued use of text messages from the outreach worker because of logistical challenges that limited its usefulness	N/A
Text message from case manager after initial phone call that had different versions for when the father was reached and when he was not reached and included some personalization (text templates provided)		Added	Changed Templates edited	N/A
Up to 6 follow-up messages total, approximately once per week, after the initial phone call until workshops started that included personalization. Most texts from case manager and one text from workshop facilitator (text templates provided)		Added	Changed Templates updated and texts reduced to four. All texts sent from the case manager	N/A

APPENDIX TABLE E.2 Peer Support Cluster Strategies

Peer Mentoring Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
ACTION FOR CHILDREN				
Mentor-initiated group				
1 contact with peer mentor during orientation	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued	Discontinued
Up to 5 weekly scheduled contacts during program participation	Implemented	Implemented	Changed Reduced number of contacts from 5 to 3	Changed Added one contact before the start of the workshop for a total of 4 contacts
Mentor scheduled to attend a workshop session the last week of the program		Added	Discontinued	Discontinued
Contact after missed sessions	Implemented	Discontinued	Discontinued	Discontinued
Contacts in advance of approaching milestone	Implemented	Discontinued	Discontinued	Discontinued
Father-initiated group				
1 contact with peer mentor during orientation	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued	Discontinued
Mentor scheduled to contact father before the start of the workshop				Added
Mentor scheduled to attend a workshop session the last week of the program		Added	Discontinued	Discontinued
CENTER FOR FAMILY SERVICES				
Mentor-initiated group				
Peer mentor assigned during orientation	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Up to 4 scheduled contacts (after enrollment, week 1, week 2, workshop completion)	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Contact after missed sessions	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued
Father-initiated group				
Peer mentor assigned during orientation	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE E.2 (Continued)

Peer Mentoring Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
CITY OF LONG BEACH				
Mentor-initiated group				
Contact with peer mentor during the orientation panel	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Up to 4 scheduled contacts (before workshop session 1, week 2, week 8, workshop completion)	Implemented	Implemented	Changed Reduced number of contacts from 4 to 3	Implemented modified strategy
Contact after missed sessions	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued Discontinued mentor contact after missed session (reassigned to Life Coaches)	Discontinued
Contacts after milestones achieved	Implemented	Implemented	Changed Reduced to only in-person contact after graduation milestone	Implemented modified strategy
Father-initiated group				
Contact with peer mentor during the orientation panel	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
CONNECTIONS TO SUCCESS				
Mentor-initiated group				
Contact with peer mentor during the orientation panel and incentive for completing mentor program	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Up to 4 scheduled contacts (before workshop session 1, week 1, week 2, week 3). Outreach discontinued after two attempts with no response	Implemented	Changed Number of contacts is the same but workshops shortened from 3 weeks to 2 weeks and timing of contacts was revised	Changed Number of contacts reduced from 4 to 3	Implemented modified strategy
Contact after missed sessions	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued
Contacts after milestones achieved	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Discontinued
Scheduled contact during the recruitment process		Unable to implement strategy	Discontinued	Discontinued
Father-initiated group				
Contact with peer mentor during the orientation panel and incentive for completing mentor program	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented
Scheduled contact during the recruitment process	Implemented	Unable to implement strategy	Discontinued	Discontinued

APPENDIX TABLE E.3 Coaching Cluster Strategies

Coaching Strategy	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
CHILDREN'S HOME & AID Integrated coaching techniques into 12 case management contacts over the 12-week workshop period	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	
HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION Integrated coaching techniques into 2 case management contacts over the 3-week workshop period	Implemented	Implemented	Changed Increased the number of expected case management contacts from 2 to 3	Implemented modified strategy
JEWISH FAMILY & CHILDREN'S SERVICE Integrated coaching techniques into 8 case management contacts over the 12-week workshop period	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented	Implemented

APPENDIX

F

**Detailed Information on Implementation
in the Outreach Cluster**

APPENDIX TABLE F.1 Information Collected from Fathers During Outreach on Recruitment and Interest in the Program, Montefiore

Recruitment Information (%)	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
Recruitment source				
Alumni/previous participant	22.0	14.9	18.1	19.8
Community provider referral	6.0	17.8	35.5	42.1
Family/friends	8.0	20.8	10.1	6.6
Internal referral	4.0	11.9	14.5	5.0
Program outreach	26.0	15.8	13.0	10.7
Self-referral	34.0	5.9	0.0	2.5
Social media	0.0	3.0	1.4	0.8
Other ^a	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Data unavailable	0.0	9.9	7.2	12.4
Interest in program/reason for referral ^b				
Case management/basic needs	4.0	7.9	9.4	11.6
Child support	4.0	4.0	3.6	4.1
Co-parent partner relationship skills	2.0	5.9	1.4	6.6
Education/training	4.0	1.0	5.1	2.5
Employment	42.0	51.5	65.2	63.6
Fathering skills	76.0	55.4	52.9	65.3
Fathering time	8.0	0.0	0.7	0.8
Systems involvement ^c	8.0	5.0	15.2	6.6
Other ^a	2.0	5.9	3.6	0.8
Data unavailable	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0
Sample size	50	101	138	121

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from SIRFboards.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because categories are not mutually exclusive.

^aOther has evolved as a category over the cycles as the program updated its options. Other was a more comprehensive category in the earlier cycles.

^bThis data was recorded during intake, with fathers choosing options from a list to indicate the reasons for their interest.

^cSystems involvement includes probation from court and child custody cases. It was also provided as a blanket option.

APPENDIX TABLE F.2 Information Collected from Fathers During Outreach on Recruitment and Interest in the Program, Chautauqua

Recruitment Information (%)	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4
Recruitment source				
Alumni/previous participant	-	-	6.0	2.6
Community provider referral	-	-	25.9	41.0
Family/friends	-	-	0.0	0.0
Internal referral	-	-	38.8	33.3
Program outreach	-	-	14.7	15.4
Self-referral	-	-	10.3	7.7
Social media	-	-	0.0	0.0
Other ^a	-	-	4.3	0.0
Data unavailable	-	-	0.0	0.0
Interest in program/reason for referral^b				
Case management/basic needs	-	-	0.9	5.1
Education/training ^c	-	-	29.3	33.3
Employment	-	-	0.0	2.6
Fathering time	-	-	40.5	30.8
Systems involvement ^d	-	-	0.0	15.4
Other ^a	-	-	29.3	12.8
Data unavailable	-	-	0.0	0.0
Sample size	105	103	116	39

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from SIRFboards.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because categories are not mutually exclusive.

There is no cycle 1 or 2 data because Chautauqua did not collect data for those cycles.

^aOther has evolved as a category over the cycles as the program updated its options. Other was a more comprehensive category in the earlier cycles.

^bThis data was recorded during intake, with fathers choosing options from a list to indicate the reasons for their interest.

^cThis category also includes fathers who chose fathering skills as a reason for interest in the program.

^dSystems involvement includes probation from court and child custody cases. It was also provided as a blanket option.

APPENDIX TABLE F.3 Information Collected from Fathers During Outreach on Recruitment and Interest in the Program, Passages

Recruitment Information (%)	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Recruitment source			
Alumni/previous participant	0.0	8.9	13.4
Community provider referral	1.9	10.3	8.5
Family/friends	7.8	2.1	1.6
Internal referral	0.0	4.8	7.7
Program outreach	60.2	28.8	45.1
Self-referral	7.8	2.7	1.2
Social media	0.0	39.7	21.1
Other ^a	22.3	2.7	1.2
Data unavailable	0.0	0.0	0.0
Interest in program/reason for referral ^b			
Case management/basic needs	18.4	13.7	15.0
Child support	28.2	16.4	17.5
Education/training	35.9	64.4	9.8
Employment	34.0	17.1	23.2
Fathering skills ^c	0.0	0.0	64.2
Systems involvement ^d	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other ^a	4.9	6.2	6.9
Data unavailable	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sample size	103	146	246

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from SIRFboards.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Passages does not have data for cycle 4 because they only conducted three cycles.

^aOther has evolved as a category over the cycles as the program updated its options. Other was a more comprehensive category in the earlier cycles.

^bThis data was collected at the time of recruitment. A staff member used a list of options to indicate the reasons the father was being referred to the program.

^cThis category did not exist until cycle 3. The fathers in cycles 1 and 2 who were interested in fathering skills are part of the education/training category.

^dSystems involvement includes probation from court and child custody cases. It was also provided as a blanket option.

APPENDIX TABLE F.4 Fathers' Reflections on the Recruitment Experience in the Outreach Cluster

Response (%)	All	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group
How did you hear about the program?			
Family, friend, or associate	44.9	44.3	45.3
Social media	16.9	18.0	16.0
Flyer or billboard	2.2	3.3	1.3
Radio or TV	3.7	4.9	2.7
Another organization	10.3	6.6	13.3
An event in the community	7.4	6.6	8.0
Something else	14.0	16.4	12.0
Don't know	0.7	0.0	1.3
What were your main reasons for enrolling in the program?			
To get help with employment	39.1	40.0	38.4
To get help with parenting issues	55.6	56.7	54.8
To get help with strengthening my relationships with others	48.1	45.0	50.7
To get help with child support	27.1	23.3	30.1
To get help with court or criminal justice issues	18.0	21.7	15.1
I was encouraged by someone else to enroll	13.5	15.0	12.3
I liked what the staff told me about the program	41.8	43.2	40.4
Another reason	11.3	13.3	9.6
Don't know	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sample size	154	71	83

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics. Only fathers in the outreach cluster were eligible to receive this survey with questions about the recruitment experience.

NOTE: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

APPENDIX TABLE F.5 Program Staff Members' Reflections on Their Experiences Working with the Program in the Outreach Cluster

Response (%)	Program Staff Members
How well has your program achieved its vision? ^a	
Our program did not make progress toward achieving the vision	6.1
Our program somewhat achieved the vision	79.6
Our program completely achieved the vision	10.2
Don't know	4.1
Do you think the strategies were implemented as planned?	
No	12.2
Yes	71.4
Don't know	16.3
How did the different intake strategies affect the initial attendee rate? That is, the number of fathers showing up to at least one workshop session	
It lowered the initial attendee rate	6.1
It did not affect the initial attendee rate	20.4
It improved the initial attendee rate	46.9
Don't know	36.7
Did the strategy introduce any additional challenges for fathers?	
No	67.4
Yes	8.2
Don't know	24.5

Sample size (total = 50)	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Reflection survey forms were sent multiple times during the study period and across the four cycles. Program staff members may have completed the survey more than once.

^aProgram staff members had the opportunity to read the program vision statement before answering the question.

APPENDIX TABLE F.6 Fathers' Reflections on the Program Participation Experience in the Outreach Cluster

Response (%)	All	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group
Have you attended any services?			
Yes, in person	24.7	14.5	39.5
Yes, online	44.1	50.9	34.2
Yes, both in person and online	26.9	30.9	21.1
No	1.1	0.0	2.6
Don't know	3.2	3.6	2.6
About how many times have you met with someone from the program?			
1 or 2 times	9.0	15.1	0.0
3 to 5 times	33.7	30.2	38.9
6 times or more	52.8	50.9	55.6
Don't know	4.5	3.8	5.6
What was your primary mode of contact with someone from the program?			
In person	32.6	24.5	44.4
By phone	24.7	30.2	16.7
By video	36.0	37.7	33.3
By text message	3.4	3.8	2.8
By email	0.0	0.0	0.0
Don't know	3.4	3.8	2.8
Do you ever find it challenging to attend services offered by the program? This could include over the phone, on video, or in person			
Yes	20.2	17.0	25.0
No	76.4	79.2	72.2
Don't know	3.4	3.8	2.8
Do you feel that the program's support is helping you reach your goals?			
Yes	92.1	92.5	91.7
No	2.2	0.0	5.6
Don't know	5.6	7.5	2.8

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE F.6 (Continued)

Response (%)	All	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I have built good and trusting relationships with program staff			
Strongly disagree or disagree	11.8	9.8	14.7
Neither agree nor disagree	4.7	5.9	2.9
Agree	32.9	33.3	32.4
Strongly agree	50.6	51.0	50.0
Don't know	0.0	0.0	0.0
What aspect of the program do you think is most useful for you to meet your goals?			
Program topics	23.5	27.5	17.6
Help with employment	14.1	7.8	23.5
Help with parenting issues	15.3	17.6	11.8
Help strengthening my relationship with my children	23.5	29.4	14.7
Help strengthening my relationships with others	12.9	11.8	14.7
Help with child support, court, or criminal justice issues	1.2	0.0	2.9
The staff	4.7	2.0	8.8
Other ^a	4.7	3.9	5.9
Sample size	105	43	62

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

^aOther includes Other services, Other fathers, Nothing, and Don't know.

APPENDIX TABLE F.7 Differences in Individual Level Contacts Between Ease-of-Intake and Case Management Intake Groups

Outcome	All Contacts			Substantive Contacts			Non-Substantive Contacts		
	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	P-Value	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	P-Value	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	P-Value
Average weekly number of contacts	3.5	3.1	0.134	1.4	1.4	0.956	2.8	2.3	0.032
Average number of contacts	19.3	21.3	0.036	5.9	7.2	0.018	13.4	14.1	0.428
Average number of contacts									
In person ^a	3.3	5.1	-	1.8	3.0	-	1.5	2.1	-
Email/mail ^b	0.2	0.3	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.2	0.3	-
Phone call	4.5	4.8	-	1.5	1.4	-	3.0	3.3	-
Text message	2.1	2.6	-	0.1	0.1	-	2.1	2.5	-
Virtual	6.9	6.5	-	0.9	1.0	-	6.1	5.5	-
Multiple contacts	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Other	2.2	2.0	-	1.6	1.6	-	0.6	0.4	-

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 1,268. There were 258 fathers in cycle 1, 350 fathers in cycle 2, 500 fathers in cycle 3, and 160 fathers in cycle 4.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program’s office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX

G

**Detailed Information on Implementation
in the Peer Mentoring Cluster**

APPENDIX TABLE G.1 Differences in Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts and Mentor-Mentee Contacts Between Mentor-Initiated and Father-Initiated Groups at Action for Children

Cycle	Expected Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts		Average Number of Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts			Average Number of Mentor-Mentee Contacts		
	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
1	5	1	2.6	0.2	0.000	1.7	0.2	0.009
2	5	1	3.1	0.2	0.002	1.4	0.1	0.013
3	3	1	3.4	1.1	0.000	1.3	0.5	0.016
4	4	1	1.9	0.9	0.163	1.2	0.4	0.273

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM and SIRFboards.

NOTES: Mentor-mentee contacts are defined as those in which the peer mentor and the father connect. It does not include outreach attempts where the peer mentor does not reach the father.

This table only captures 1:1 contact outreach attempts. There were also outreach attempts during orientation which are not captured in this table.

For the mentor-initiated group, the sample size for each cycle is as follows: 12 fathers in cycle 1, 13 fathers in cycle 2, 36 fathers in cycle 3, and 11 fathers in cycle 4. For the father-initiated group, there were 11 fathers in cycle 1, 11 fathers in cycle 2, 34 fathers in cycle 3, and 9 fathers in cycle 4.

APPENDIX TABLE G.2 Differences in Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts and Mentor-Mentee Contacts Between Mentor-Initiated and Father-Initiated Groups at City of Long Beach

Cycle	Expected Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts		Average Number of Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts			Average Number of Mentor-Mentee Contacts		
	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
1	4	0	3.8	0.0	0.001	2.0	0.0	0.001
2	4	0	3.4	0.0	0.001	3.0	0.0	0.001
3	3	0	2.6	0.0	0.000	2.0	0.0	0.000
4	3	0	2.1	0.0	0.000	1.6	0.0	0.000

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM and SIRFboards.

NOTES: Mentor-mentee contacts are defined as those in which the peer mentor and the father connect. It does not include outreach attempts where the peer mentor does not reach the father.

For the mentor-initiated group, the sample size for each cycle is as follows: 5 fathers in cycle 1, 7 fathers in cycle 2, 25 fathers in cycle 3, and 15 fathers in cycle 4. For the father-initiated group, there were 8 fathers in cycle 1, 6 fathers in cycle 2, 26 fathers in cycle 3, and 21 fathers in cycle 4.

APPENDIX TABLE G.3 Differences in Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts and Mentor-Mentee Contacts Between Mentor-Initiated and Father-Initiated Groups at Center for Family Services

Cycle	Expected Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts		Average Number of Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts			Average Number of Mentor-Mentee Contacts		
	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
1 ^a	4	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	4	0	6.4	0.8	0.000	4.0	0.8	0.000
3	4	0	3.0	0.1	0.000	1.6	0.1	0.002
4	4	0	2.5	0.0	0.002	0.0	0.0	-

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM and SIRFboards.

NOTES: Mentor-mentee contacts are defined as those in which the peer mentor and the father connect. It does not include outreach attempts where the peer mentor does not reach the father.

For the mentor-initiated group, the sample size for each cycle is as follows: 1 father in cycle 1, 23 fathers in cycle 2, 7 fathers in cycle 3, and 4 fathers in cycle 4. For the father-initiated group, there was 1 father in cycle 1, 14 fathers in cycle 2, 13 fathers in cycle 3, and 8 fathers in cycle 4.

^aStatistics are not shown because there is only 1 father in cycle 1 assigned to each of the groups.

APPENDIX TABLE G.4 Differences in Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts and Mentor-Mentee Contacts Between Mentor-Initiated and Father-Initiated Groups at Connections to Success

Cycle	Expected Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts		Average Number of Mentor-Initiated Outreach Attempts			Average Number of Mentor-Mentee Contacts		
	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
1	4	0	1.3	0.0	0.146	0.3	0.0	0.316
2	4	0	2.2	0.0	0.000	1.6	0.0	0.006
3	3	0	1.9	0.0	0.002	1.0	0.0	0.043
4	3	0	2.5	0.0	0.000	2.0	0.0	0.000

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM and SIRFboards.

NOTES: Mentor-mentee contacts are defined as those in which the peer mentor and the father connect. It does not include outreach attempts where the peer mentor does not reach the father.

For the mentor-initiated group, the sample size for each cycle is as follows: 6 fathers in cycle 1, 13 fathers in cycle 2, 21 fathers in cycle 3, and 12 fathers in cycle 4. For the father-initiated group, there was 3 fathers in cycle 1, 5 fathers in cycle 2, 7 fathers in cycle 3, and 6 fathers in cycle 4.

APPENDIX TABLE G.5 Program Staff Members' Reflections on Their Experiences Working with the Program in the Peer Mentoring Cluster

Response (%)	Program Staff Members
How well has your program achieved its vision? ^a	
Our program did not make progress toward achieving the vision	9.3
Our program somewhat achieved the vision	86.1
Our program completely achieved the vision	2.3
Don't know	2.3
Do you think the strategies were implemented as planned?	
No	14.0
Yes	60.5
Don't know	25.6
How did the different peer mentoring strategies affect the completed rate? That is, the number of fathers completing at least 90% of workshop hours	
It lowered the completed rate	7.0
It did not affect the completed rate	34.9
It improved the completed rate	41.9
Don't know	27.9
Did the strategy introduce any additional challenges for fathers?	
No	55.8
Yes	18.6
Don't know	25.6

Sample size (total = 45)	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Reflection survey forms were sent multiple times during the study period and across the four cycles. Program staff members may have completed the survey more than once.

^aProgram staff members had the opportunity to read the program vision statement before answering the question.

APPENDIX TABLE G.6 Differences in Individual Level Contacts Between Mentor-Initiated and Father-Initiated Groups

Outcome	All Contacts			Substantive Contacts			Non-Substantive Contacts		
	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	P-Value
Average weekly number of contacts	1.2	1.6	0.028	0.7	1.2	0.012	0.9	1.1	0.141
Average number of contacts	20.4	19.7	0.628	5.7	6.1	0.566	14.7	13.6	0.352
Average number of contacts...									
In person ^a	3.2	3.2	-	2.3	2.6	-	0.8	0.7	-
Email/mail ^b	1.1	1.1	-	0.1	0.0	-	1.0	1.0	-
Phone call	7.3	7.1	-	2.7	2.7	-	4.6	4.4	-
Text message	7.9	7.3	-	0.3	0.3	-	7.6	7.0	-
Virtual	0.4	0.5	-	0.3	0.4	-	0.1	0.1	-
Multiple contacts	0.1	0.1	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.0	0.1	-
Other	0.5	0.4	-	0.0	0.0	-	0.5	0.4	-

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 394. There were 47 fathers in cycle 1, 92 fathers in cycle 2, 169 fathers in cycle 3, and 86 fathers in cycle 4.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program’s office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX TABLE G.7 Fathers' Reflections on the Program Participation Experience in the Peer Mentoring Cluster

Response (%)	All	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group
Have you attended any services?			
Yes, in person	18.3	24.6	12.7
Yes, online	49.2	52.6	46.0
Yes, both in person and online	17.5	10.5	23.8
No	12.5	12.3	12.7
Don't know	2.5	0.0	4.8
About how many times have you met with someone from the program?			
1 or 2 times	37.3	38.0	36.5
3 to 5 times	39.2	32.0	46.2
6 times or more	14.7	14.0	15.4
Don't know	8.8	16.0	1.9
What was your primary mode of contact with someone from the program?			
In person	25.5	22.0	28.8
By phone	38.2	40.0	36.5
By video	23.5	22.0	25.0
By text message	9.8	14.0	5.8
By email	2.0	0.0	3.8
Don't know	1.0	2.0	0.0
Do you ever find it challenging to attend services offered by the program? This could include over the phone, on video, or in person			
Yes	8.8	10.0	7.7
No	90.2	90.0	90.4
Don't know	1.0	0.0	1.9
Do you feel that the program's support is helping you reach your goals?			
Yes	96.1	92.0	100.0
No	0.0	0.0	0.0
Don't know	3.9	8.0	0.0

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE G.7 (Continued)

Response (%)	All	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I have built good and trusting relationships with program staff			
Strongly disagree or disagree	18.6	16.0	21.2
Neither agree nor disagree	6.9	8.0	5.8
Agree	32.4	38.0	26.9
Strongly agree	41.2	38.0	44.2
Don't know	1.0	0.0	1.9
What aspect of the program do you think is most useful for you to meet your goals?			
Program topics	25.5	26.0	25.0
Help with employment	5.9	2.0	9.6
Help with parenting issues	15.7	14.0	17.3
Help strengthening my relationship with my children	19.6	24.0	15.4
Help strengthening my relationships with others	9.8	12.0	7.7
Help with child support, court, or criminal justice issues	11.8	12.0	11.5
The staff	4.9	2.0	7.7
Other ^a	6.9	8.0	5.8
Sample size	130	69	61

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive

^aOther includes Other services, Other fathers, Nothing, and Don't know.

APPENDIX

H

**Detailed Information on Implementation
in the Coaching Cluster**

APPENDIX TABLE H.1 Individual Level Contacts in the Coaching Cluster

Outcome	All Contacts	Substantive Contacts	Non-Substantive Contacts
Average weekly number of contacts	2.3	1.8	1.7
Average number of contacts	45.0	11.9	33.1
Average number of contacts...			
In person ^a	0.2	0.1	0.1
Email/mail ^b	32.3	9.0	23.3
Phone call	2.3	1.1	1.2
Text message	8.0	0.1	8.0
Virtual	1.5	1.4	0.2
Multiple contacts	0.1	0.0	0.1
Other	0.5	0.2	0.3

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 512. This sample includes all coaching programs.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program's office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX TABLE H.2 Individual Level Contacts in the Coaching Cluster, Cycle 1

Outcome	All Contacts	Substantive Contacts	Non-Substantive Contacts
Average weekly number of contacts	1.3	2.0	0.9
Average number of contacts	47.4	12.5	34.9
Average number of contacts			
In person ^a	0.2	0.0	0.2
Email/mail ^b	33.8	6.6	27.2
Phone call	4.0	1.6	2.5
Text message	4.1	0.1	4.0
Virtual	4.5	4.1	0.4
Multiple contacts	0.2	0.0	0.2
Other	0.5	0.0	0.5

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 97. This sample includes fathers from Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program’s office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX TABLE H.3 Individual Level Contacts in the Coaching Cluster, Cycle 2

Outcome	All Contacts	Substantive Contacts	Non-Substantive Contacts
Average weekly number of contacts	1.4	2.3	0.7
Average number of contacts	33.5	12.0	21.5
Average number of contacts...			
In person ^a	0.4	0.3	0.2
Email/mail ^b	24.7	8.3	16.5
Phone call	2.5	0.8	1.8
Text message	2.3	0.0	2.3
Virtual	1.8	1.6	0.2
Multiple contacts	0.2	0.1	0.1
Other	1.6	1.1	0.5

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 104. This sample includes fathers from Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program’s office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX TABLE H.4 Individual Level Contacts in the Coaching Cluster, Cycle 3

Outcome	All Contacts^a	Substantive Contacts	Non-Substantive Contacts
Average weekly number of contacts	2.5	2.2	2.0
Average number of contacts	56.1	13.3	42.8
Average number of contacts...			
In person ^a	0.1	0.0	0.0
Email/mail ^b	41.7	12.2	29.6
Phone call	1.2	0.8	0.4
Text message	12.8	0.1	12.8
Virtual	0.3	0.2	0.1
Multiple contacts	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 169. This sample includes fathers from Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program’s office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX TABLE H.5 Individual Level Contacts in the Coaching Cluster, Cycle 4

Outcome	All Contacts	Substantive Contacts	Non-Substantive Contacts
Average weekly number of contacts	3.7	0.8	2.9
Average number of contacts	39.4	10.2	29.2
Average number of contacts...			
In person ^a	0.2	0.1	0.1
Email/mail ^b	27.2	8.2	19.0
Phone call	1.7	1.2	0.5
Text message	9.3	0.1	9.2
Virtual	0.7	0.6	0.2
Multiple contacts	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	0.3	0.0	0.3

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: The overall number of fathers in the sample is 127. This sample includes fathers from Jewish Family & Children’s Service and Housing Opportunities Commission.

Substantive contacts meet these criteria: (1) last 15 minutes or longer, (2) result in direct contact with the client, and (3) cover client issues and needs beyond just reminder contacts. Any contact that does not meet the above criteria is a non-substantive contact.

^aIn-person contacts include contacts made in the community, in the program’s office, and during home visits.

^bEmail/mail contacts are mostly email contacts.

APPENDIX TABLE H.6 Program Staff Members' Reflections on Their Experiences Working with the Program in the Coaching Cluster

Response (%)	Program Staff Members
How well has your program achieved its vision? ^a	
Our program did not make progress toward achieving the vision	0.0
Our program somewhat achieved the vision	71.1
Our program completely achieved the vision	29.0
Don't know	0.0
Do you think the strategies were implemented as planned?	
No	18.4
Yes	79.0
Don't know	2.6
How did the strategy affect the quality of the father's experience in your program?	
It has lowered the quality of a father's experience in the program	0.0
It has not changed the quality of a father's experience in the program	42.1
It has improved the quality of a father's experience in the program	55.3
Don't know	2.6
Do you think the strategy increased fathers' retention in the program?	
No	2.6
Yes	47.4
Don't know	50.0
Did the strategy introduce any additional challenges for fathers?	
No	52.6
Yes	29.0
Don't know	18.4
Sample size (total = 39)	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

Reflection survey forms were sent multiple times during the study period and across the four cycles. Program staff members may have completed the survey more than once.

^aProgram staff members had the opportunity to read the program's vision statement before answering the question.

APPENDIX TABLE H.7 Fathers' Reflections on the Program
Participation Experience in the Coaching Cluster

Response (%)	Fathers
Have you attended any services?	
Yes, in person	3.3
Yes, online	73.2
Yes, both in person and online	6.6
No	14.6
Don't know	2.4
About how many times have you met with someone from the program?	
1 or 2 times	23.7
3 to 5 times	20.3
6 times or more	48.0
Don't know	7.9
What was your primary mode of contact with someone from the program?	
In person	4.0
By phone	35.0
By video	44.6
By text message	6.2
By email	8.5
Don't know	1.7
Do you ever find it challenging to attend services offered by the program? This could include over the phone, on video, or in person.	
Yes	11.9
No	86.4
Don't know	1.7
Do you feel that the program's support is helping you reach your goals?	
Yes	94.9
No	0.0
Don't know	5.1
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: I have built good and trusting relationships with program staff	
Strongly disagree or disagree	7.4
Neither agree nor disagree	2.3
Agree	34.9
Strongly agree	54.9
Don't know	0.6

(continued)

APPENDIX TABLE H.7 (Continued)

Response (%)	Fathers
What aspect of the program do you think is most useful for you to meet your goals?	
Program topics	22.9
Help with employment	7.4
Help with parenting issues	18.3
Help strengthening my relationship with my children	12.0
Help strengthening my relationships with others	13.1
Help with child support, court, or criminal justice issues	6.3
The staff	11.4
Other ^a	8.6

Sample size (total = 229)	

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from reflection survey forms conducted through Qualtrics.

NOTES: Distributions may not add to 100 percent because of rounding or because categories are not mutually exclusive.

^aOther includes Other services, Other fathers, Nothing, and Don't know.

APPENDIX



Effects on Program Participation by Program

APPENDIX TABLE I.1 Effects of Outreach Strategies on Enrollment, Initial Engagement, and Retention at Montefiore

Outcomes (%)	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	Difference	P-Value
Enrolled (%)				
All cycles	51.7	42.0	9.8**	0.048
Cycle 1	63.6	64.7	-1.1	0.942
Cycle 2	63.4	43.3	20.1**	0.048
Cycle 3	56.3	43.2	13.0	0.129
Cycle 4	34.3	31.5	2.8	0.743
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	48.3	38.0	10.2**	0.036
Cycle 1	63.6	58.8	4.8	0.746
Cycle 2	53.7	38.3	15.3	0.131
Cycle 3	53.1	40.5	12.6	0.141
Cycle 4	32.8	27.8	5.1	0.552
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	34.6	30.6	4.0	0.351
Cycle 1	55.9	47.1	8.8	0.544
Cycle 2	33.1	33.5	-0.5	0.959
Cycle 3	40.6	30.6	10.1	0.183
Cycle 4	19.3	22.1	-2.8	0.683
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 410)	205	205		
Cycle 1 (total = 50)	33	17		
Cycle 2 (total = 101)	41	60		
Cycle 3 (total = 138)	64	74		
Cycle 4 (total = 121)	67	54		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.2 Effects of Outreach Strategies on Enrollment, Initial Engagement, and Retention at Chautauqua

Outcomes (%)	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	Difference	P-Value
Enrolled (%)				
All cycles	33.5	32.6	0.9	0.856
Cycle 1	24.4	32.8	-8.4	0.361
Cycle 2	15.6	25.9	-10.3	0.209
Cycle 3	42.0	23.4	18.6**	0.039
Cycle 4	61.9	77.8	-15.9	0.297
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	30.1	32.1	-2.0	0.686
Cycle 1	22.0	32.8	-10.9	0.233
Cycle 2	13.3	24.1	-10.8	0.172
Cycle 3	36.2	23.4	12.8	0.145
Cycle 4	61.9	77.8	-15.9	0.297
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	25.4	29.6	-4.3	0.351
Cycle 1	20.9	32.2	-11.2	0.209
Cycle 2	10.9	20.4	-9.5	0.185
Cycle 3	27.6	22.0	5.6	0.485
Cycle 4	57.5	70.4	-12.8	0.407
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 363)	176	187		
Cycle 1 (total = 105)	41	64		
Cycle 2 (total = 103)	45	58		
Cycle 3 (total = 116)	69	47		
Cycle 4 (total = 39)	21	18		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.3 Effects of Outreach Strategies on Enrollment, Initial Engagement, and Retention at Passages

Outcomes (%)	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	Difference	P-Value
Enrolled (%)				
All cycles	35.3	32.5	2.8	0.508
Cycle 1	45.3	32.0	13.3	0.170
Cycle 2	41.9	38.9	3.0	0.714
Cycle 3	27.0	29.0	-2.0	0.731
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	32.5	28.9	3.7	0.377
Cycle 1	43.4	28.0	15.4	0.106
Cycle 2	37.8	34.7	3.1	0.698
Cycle 3	24.6	25.8	-1.2	0.827
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	26.0	24.9	1.1	0.765
Cycle 1	36.9	20.8	16.1*	0.062
Cycle 2	32.6	34.2	-1.6	0.832
Cycle 3	17.2	21.1	-3.8	0.424
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 495)	249	246		
Cycle 1 (total = 103)	53	50		
Cycle 2 (total = 146)	74	72		
Cycle 3 (total = 246)	122	124		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.4 Effects of Peer Mentoring Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at Action for Children

Outcomes (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Difference	P-Value
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	79.2	84.6	-5.4	0.413
Cycle 1	83.3	81.8	1.5	0.928
Cycle 2	84.6	100.0	-15.4	0.189
Cycle 3	69.4	76.5	-7.0	0.516
Cycle 4	100.0	100.0	0.0	
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	50.8	67.5	-16.7**	0.029
Cycle 1	65.5	76.9	-11.4	0.542
Cycle 2	57.7	110.0	-52.3***	0.005
Cycle 3	38.2	52.9	-14.7	0.149
Cycle 4	68.2	59.3	8.9	0.572
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 137)	72	65		
Cycle 1 (total = 23)	12	11		
Cycle 2 (total = 24)	13	11		
Cycle 3 (total = 70)	36	34		
Cycle 4 (total = 20)	11	9		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.5 Effects of Peer Mentoring Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at Center for Family Services

Outcomes (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Difference	P-Value
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	80.0	91.7	-11.7	0.162
Cycle 1	100.0	100.0	0.0	
Cycle 2	78.3	92.9	-14.6	0.255
Cycle 3	71.4	92.3	-20.9	0.234
Cycle 4	100.0	87.5	12.5	0.506
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	50.0	66.3	-16.3	0.110
Cycle 1	100.0	75.0	25.0	
Cycle 2	48.4	64.7	-16.4	0.280
Cycle 3	46.4	69.2	-22.8	0.258
Cycle 4	100.0	87.5	12.5	0.506
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 71)	35	36		
Cycle 1 (total = 2)	1	1		
Cycle 2 (total = 37)	23	14		
Cycle 3 (total = 20)	7	13		
Cycle 4 (total = 12)	4	8		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.6 Effects of Peer Mentoring Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at City of Long Beach

Outcomes (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Difference	P-Value
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	94.2	85.2	9.0	0.125
Cycle 1	100.0	75.0	25.0	0.260
Cycle 2	100.0	100.0	0.0	
Cycle 3	100.0	92.3	7.7	0.163
Cycle 4	80.0	76.2	3.8	0.794
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	85.8	73.4	12.3*	0.079
Cycle 1	94.0	67.5	26.5	0.238
Cycle 2	90.0	75.0	15.0	0.434
Cycle 3	88.0	82.3	5.7	0.517
Cycle 4	77.3	64.3	13.0	0.402

Sample size				

All cycles (total = 113)	52	61		
Cycle 1 (total = 13)	5	8		
Cycle 2 (total = 13)	7	6		
Cycle 3 (total = 51)	25	26		
Cycle 4 (total = 36)	15	21		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.7 Effects of Peer Mentoring Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at Connections to Success

Outcomes (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Difference	P-Value
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)				
All cycles	82.7	90.5	-7.8	0.407
Cycle 1	100.0	66.7	33.3	0.170
Cycle 2	92.3	100.0	-7.7	0.551
Cycle 3	76.2	85.7	-9.5	0.611
Cycle 4	75.0	100.0	-25.0	0.201
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)				
All cycles	72.0	80.9	-8.9	0.375
Cycle 1	68.1	63.9	4.2	0.897
Cycle 2	78.5	90.0	-11.5	0.537
Cycle 3	68.4	69.8	-1.4	0.940
Cycle 4	73.1	94.6	-21.5	0.261

Sample size				

All cycles (total = 73)	52	21		
Cycle 1 (total = 9)	6	3		
Cycle 2 (total = 18)	13	5		
Cycle 3 (total = 28)	21	7		
Cycle 4 (total = 18)	12	6		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE I.8 Effects of Coaching Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at Housing Opportunities Commission

Outcomes (%)	Fathers in the SIRF Study
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)	
All cycles	94.6
Cycle 1	98.4
Cycle 2	100.0
Cycle 3	93.7
Cycle 4	90.6
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)	
All cycles	76.1
Cycle 1	78.5
Cycle 2	83.2
Cycle 3	78.2
Cycle 4	67.7
Sample size	
All cycles	387
Cycle 1	64
Cycle 2	58
Cycle 3	159
Cycle 4	106

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

APPENDIX TABLE I.9 Effects of Coaching Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at Jewish Family and Children’s Service

Characteristics (%)	Fathers in the SIRF Study
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)	
All cycles	84.5
Cycle 1	90.9
Cycle 2	78.3
Cycle 3	80.0
Cycle 4	90.5
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)	
All cycles	69.5
Cycle 1	80.8
Cycle 2	57.8
Cycle 3	61.7
Cycle 4	90.5

Sample size	
All cycles	110
Cycle 1	33
Cycle 2	46
Cycle 3	10
Cycle 4	21

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

APPENDIX TABLE I.10 Effects of Coaching Strategies on Initial Engagement and Retention at Children’s Home and Aid

Characteristics (%)	Fathers in the SIRF Study
Attended at least one primary workshop session (%)	
All cycles	100.0
Average participation achieved in primary workshop(s) (%)	
All cycles	80.0

Sample size	
All cycles	15

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

APPENDIX

J

**Effects of Approaches on Additional
Measures of Retention**

APPENDIX TABLE J.1 Effects of Outreach Strategies on Retention

Outcomes (%)	Ease-of-Intake Group	Case Management Intake Group	Difference	P-Value
Achieved at least 50% primary workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	27.9	28.5	-0.6	0.816
Cycle 1	36.2	29.8	6.4	0.272
Cycle 2	26.3	30.5	-4.3	0.379
Cycle 3	25.1	24.9	0.2	0.959
Cycle 4	27.3	33.3	-6.1	0.408
Achieved at least 90% primary workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	24.8	24.5	0.3	0.898
Cycle 1	33.9	27.5	6.4	0.268
Cycle 2	23.1	27.9	-4.8	0.310
Cycle 3	21.6	19.6	2.0	0.586
Cycle 4	23.9	26.4	-2.5	0.716
Achieved full workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	21.0	20.8	0.1	0.963
Cycle 1	29.9	25.2	4.7	0.397
Cycle 2	15.6	23.2	-7.5*	0.078
Cycle 3	18.8	15.5	3.3	0.327
Cycle 4	23.9	25.0	-1.1	0.869

Sample size				
All cycles (total = 1,268)	630	638		
Cycle 1 (total = 258)	127	131		
Cycle 2 (total = 350)	160	190		
Cycle 3 (total = 500)	255	245		
Cycle 4 (total = 160)	88	72		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent. Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

APPENDIX TABLE J.2 Effects of Peer Mentoring Strategies on Retention

Outcomes (%)	Mentor-Initiated Group	Father-Initiated Group	Difference	P-Value
Achieved at least 50% primary workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	63.0	70.0	-7.0	0.152
Cycle 1	81.2	71.7	9.5	0.537
Cycle 2	60.1	78.7	-18.6	0.130
Cycle 3	54.2	67.2	-13.1*	0.082
Cycle 4	75.4	66.7	8.7	0.451
Achieved at least 90% primary workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	53.9	61.9	-7.9	0.118
Cycle 1	66.4	61.1	5.3	0.746
Cycle 2	54.6	70.6	-15.9	0.200
Cycle 3	49.2	59.1	-9.9	0.196
Cycle 4	55.7	60.5	-4.7	0.705
Achieved full workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	42.7	49.7	-7.0	0.162
Cycle 1	49.5	52.7	-3.3	0.821
Cycle 2	48.1	58.5	-10.3	0.428
Cycle 3	38.2	45.0	-6.7	0.339
Cycle 4	45.4	45.3	0.0	0.997
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 394)	211	183		
Cycle 1 (total = 47)	24	23		
Cycle 2 (total = 92)	56	36		
Cycle 3 (total = 169)	89	80		
Cycle 4 (total = 86)	42	44		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

Estimates are adjusted by including baseline characteristics and indicators of which programs the fathers participated in.

APPENDIX TABLE J.3 Effects of Coaching Strategies on Retention

Outcomes (%)	Coaching Cluster	Outreach Cluster	Difference	P-Value
Achieved at least 50% primary workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	76.7	73.1	3.6	0.275
Cycle 1	80.8	75.8	5.0	0.497
Cycle 2	77.7	74.0	3.7	0.579
Cycle 3	79.9	70.7	9.2	0.118
Cycle 4	73.4	64.5	8.9	0.378
Achieved at least 90% primary workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	50.4	62.8	-12.4***	0.001
Cycle 1	65.6	72.7	-7.1	0.402
Cycle 2	47.2	69.3	-22.1***	0.005
Cycle 3	56.8	57.7	-0.9	0.898
Cycle 4	35.9	41.1	-5.2	0.630
Achieved full workshop(s) completion				
All cycles	33.3	49.9	-16.6***	0.000
Cycle 1	59.3	60.4	-1.2	0.891
Cycle 2	28.5	50.8	-22.3***	0.005
Cycle 3	30.9	46.6	-15.7**	0.019
Cycle 4	21.0	38.3	-17.3*	0.080
Sample size				
All cycles (total = 872)	512	360		
Cycle 1 (total = 169)	97	72		
Cycle 2 (total = 215)	104	111		
Cycle 3 (total = 306)	169	137		
Cycle 4 (total = 167)	127	40		

SOURCE: MDRC calculations using data from nFORM.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: *** = 1 percent; ** = 5 percent; and * = 10 percent.

Two-tailed t-tests were used to assess differences between the research groups.

Estimates are adjusted by including baseline characteristics of fathers participating in the programs.

APPENDIX

K

**Detailed Information on Recruitment
Activities in the Outreach Cluster**

In addition to testing two versions of intake methods, as discussed in the body of the report, the three programs in the outreach cluster also wanted to recruit more potential program participants. To achieve this goal, programs tried cultivating new referral sources, and each focused on different ways of using social media as a recruitment tool. Programs were interested in using social media because of its potential to reach many fathers. This appendix provides more details on what programs did during the various learning cycles to improve recruitment.

As they developed their recruitment strategies, staff members also enhanced their data collection practices. For SIRF, programs tracked a father's recruitment source, so they could reflect on which sources they had success with and which sources presented untapped opportunities to grow their outreach. They also tracked the reasons fathers were interested in the program so that they could better target their recruitment messaging over time. These data are available in Appendix Tables F.1 through F.3. Additionally, the programs tracked social media data, including impressions, a social media metric that shows how many times a post appeared on a screen, and interactions, a metric that shows how many times people engaged with a post through activities such as clicks, likes, reactions, and comments.¹

Recruitment activities tried over the cycles included:

Chautauqua

Chautauqua's program developed several social media messages and posted one per week on Facebook and Twitter to better understand which messages were most effective. Content was posted at the same day and time and posts were repeated on a rotating basis throughout the cycle. In cycle 2, three messages were used:

- A post promoting the benefits of fatherhood workshops
- A post promoting the benefits of case management services
- A video about the program

In cycle 3, the program used the same messages and added a fourth post with a graduation photo (see Box 1 in the body of the report) that had more impressions than any of the other three posts. In cycle 4, the program continued to use the graduation photo and the video. The program discontinued use of the other messages and added more posts with photos of their participants, including photos of participants engaging in services.

1 Data related to social media for all three programs was recorded by the programs based on information generated by the social media platforms. Impressions and interactions may vary by the point in time when the programs recorded the data, so the study team cannot confirm the accuracy of the social media data. However, it provided a comparison that programs found useful and which they used to inform decision making.

In addition to their focus on social media, Chautauqua used paid radio and web advertising and in-person outreach in the community throughout all the cycles. In cycle 3, the program sent an email reminder to referral partners encouraging them to refer more fathers to the program. In cycle 4, they expanded on this strategy by sending weekly email reminders to referral partners reminding them of eligibility requirements and asking if they wanted to make any referrals, but the program reported that it did not result in an increase in referrals from those partners.

Montefiore

Montefiore’s program began developing social media strategies during cycle 2 by engaging an outside consultant and developing detailed plans internally. During cycle 3, Montefiore created six types of posts that emphasized different facets of its program. They also created a social media calendar to post content on Facebook and Instagram on a regular basis during cycles 3 and 4. Because their fatherhood program is called “HERO Dads,” the program used categories that played on its name:

- HEROSKILLS—highlights fathering skills gained by participants
- HEROJOB—emphasizes vocational services
- HEROBRO—features current and former participants
- HEROTEAM—highlights staff members
- HEROEVENTS—announces upcoming events
- HEROSUPPORT (added near the end of cycle 3)—emphasizes community and father resources

In cycles 3 and 4, “HEROBRO” posts had the most interactions and impressions on Instagram. In cycle 3, “HEROJOB” posts had the most on Facebook, and in cycle 4, “HEROEVENTS” had the most on Facebook. During cycle 4, the program also experimented with making paid boosted ads for each type of post and started doing digital paid searches and geofencing to compare three types of ads: parenting-focused, coparenting-focused, and employment-focused.² Over the cycles, the program also continued to develop relationships with referral partners so that more than a third of referrals came from community partners in cycles 3 and 4.

Passages

The Passages program also engaged an outside social media consultant and worked internally on their plans for social media during cycle 2. They began posting more regularly on Facebook,

² A boosted post is a paid ad using one of the program’s social media posts. Geofencing is a type of targeted advertising that shows ads to people when they are using their phones near specific locations. The program identified specific locations where fathers may be, such as gyms, barbershops, and family law practices and used a vendor to help target ads to people near those locations.

Instagram, and Twitter using a variety of messages about participants, staff members, fathers in general, inspirational words, and other helpful information with the goal of building engagement. At the end of cycle 2, they piloted a Facebook boosted post. About 70 fathers referred themselves to the program over a period of approximately five weeks by sending a direct message through a link on this post. This accounted for about 40 percent of Passages' referrals in cycle 2. Because of this success in recruiting fathers, Passages boosted three new posts on Facebook and piloted boosted posts on Instagram during cycle 3. In cycle 3, posts boosted on Facebook included:

- A flyer post used in cycle 2
- A variation of the flyer post
- A video of a father describing his experience with the program
- A photo of fathers with their program certificates

Though none of these posts were as successful as the first boosted ad, they continued to provide a steady stream of recruits to the program. Passages also boosted several of these posts on Instagram and gained a few—though fewer—referrals from that source.

In cycles 2 and 3, Passages also cultivated relationships with several new referral partners, and in cycle 3, they conducted outreach at community events. Passages also worked to increase referrals from alumni in cycles 2 and 3.

APPENDIX FIGURE K.1 Montefiore HERO Dads



herodadsnyc • Follow

herodadsnyc Text HEROSUPPORT to 917-886-2512 to begin your enrollment process. Our July workshops will begin soon!

Allow us to introduce... Dad League!

Our Dad League is made up of HERO Dads graduates who provide mentorship and support to our new dad cohorts! These dads have not only successfully completed our HERO Dads program, but they also continue to learn from and support each other by attending our weekly HERO Dads support group. It's dads like these that make our program great!
 @MontefioreHealthSystem
 @BronxWorks

#dadsofinstagram #dadlife

24 likes

JUNE 29

Log in to like or comment.



herodadsnyc • Follow

herodadsnyc Text HEROSUPPORT to 917-886-2512 to begin your enrollment process. Our July workshops will begin soon!

Allow us to introduce... Dad League!

Our Dad League is made up of HERO Dads graduates who provide mentorship and support to our new dad cohorts! These dads have not only successfully completed our HERO Dads program, but they also continue to learn from and support each other by attending our weekly HERO Dads support group. It's dads like these that make our program great!
 @MontefioreHealthSystem
 @BronxWorks

#dadsofinstagram #dadlife

24 likes

JUNE 29

Log in to like or comment.



HERODADSNYC
Posts

Follow



24 likes

herodadsnyc Text HEROSUPPORT to 917-886-2512 to begin your enrollment process. Our July workshops will begin soon!

Allow us to introduce... Dad League!

Our Dad League is made up of HERO Dads graduates who provide mentorship and support to our new dad cohorts! These dads have not only successfully completed our HERO Dads program, but they also continue to learn from and support each other by attending our weekly HERO Dads support group. It's dads like these that make our program great! @MontefioreHealthSystem @BronxWorks

#dadsofinstagram #dadlife
#HEROSUPPORT #HERODADS

View 1 comment

June 29



APPENDIX FIGURE K.2 Passages Social Media Post

 Passages, Connecting Fathers & Families
January 31 · 🌐

Looking for some help with parenting, employment, or healthier relationship goals? Reach out today to learn more, and sign up for our STEPS League of Extraordinary Father's program, and let's get to work achieving all of your goals! #findyourpassage #Jointheleague #leagueofextraordinaryfathers #raddad #workforcedevelopment #parenting #healthyrelationships



JOIN THE LEAGUE

ECONOMIC STABILITY CHILD SUPPORT ADVOCACY
CAREER DEVELOPMENT PARENTING TIME & VISITATION
MEN'S HEALTH GAIN KNOWLEDGE TO THRIVE &
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS
PARENTING / CO-PARENTING AS A DAD

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APPENDIX



Additional Information on Use of Coaching Techniques in the Coaching Cluster

To help assess use of the coaching model and provide structured opportunities for reflection, case managers in the three coaching cluster programs were asked to regularly complete an observation form with information about the frequency with which they used coaching techniques during interactions with fathers. Case managers were also asked to participate in peer observations where a supervisor or another case manager sat in on or viewed a recording of a case management meeting and completed the same observation form noting the use of coaching techniques. See Appendix B for a copy of the observation form. Case managers aimed to complete at least one self-observation and one peer observation per week. Data from these observations were included in each program's SIRFboard.

The coaching intervention was focused on increasing the frequency of open-ended questions, reflections, affirmations, summaries, asking for permission before offering advice or information, and cognitive rehearsals. Case managers were trained to avoid closed-ended questions and directive statements. Not every technique was intended to be used in every meeting, but case managers were expected to use open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries very frequently.

Data from 65 observations indicates that case managers at the Children's Home & Aid program most frequently used open-ended questions and affirmations and least frequently used cognitive rehearsals, which is consistent with cluster-wide trends.¹ Appendix Figure L.1 shows that case managers at Children's Home & Aid typically used summaries and reflections but did not use them in every case management session. Case managers at the Housing Opportunities Commission program used summaries and open-ended questions in all 88 case management sessions that were observed across the four cycles, which aligns with expectations about how frequently these techniques should be used. Similarly, data from 144 observations across four cycles shows that case managers at the Jewish Family & Children's Service program used open-ended questions and affirmations in every case management session that was observed.

Furthermore, use of coaching techniques changed across cycles. Case managers at the Housing Opportunities Commission program increased use of cognitive rehearsals across cycles, which indicates increased comfort with that technique. Observations of case managers at the programs at Housing Opportunities Commission and Jewish Family & Children's Service indicate that staff members' use of reflections changed across cycles—in some cases increasing and, in some cases, decreasing. Appendix Figures L.2–L.5 show that case managers at Housing Opportunities Commission increased the frequency with which they “used a lot” of or “never used” reflections. Case managers at Jewish Family & Children's Service decreased use of reflections across cycles.

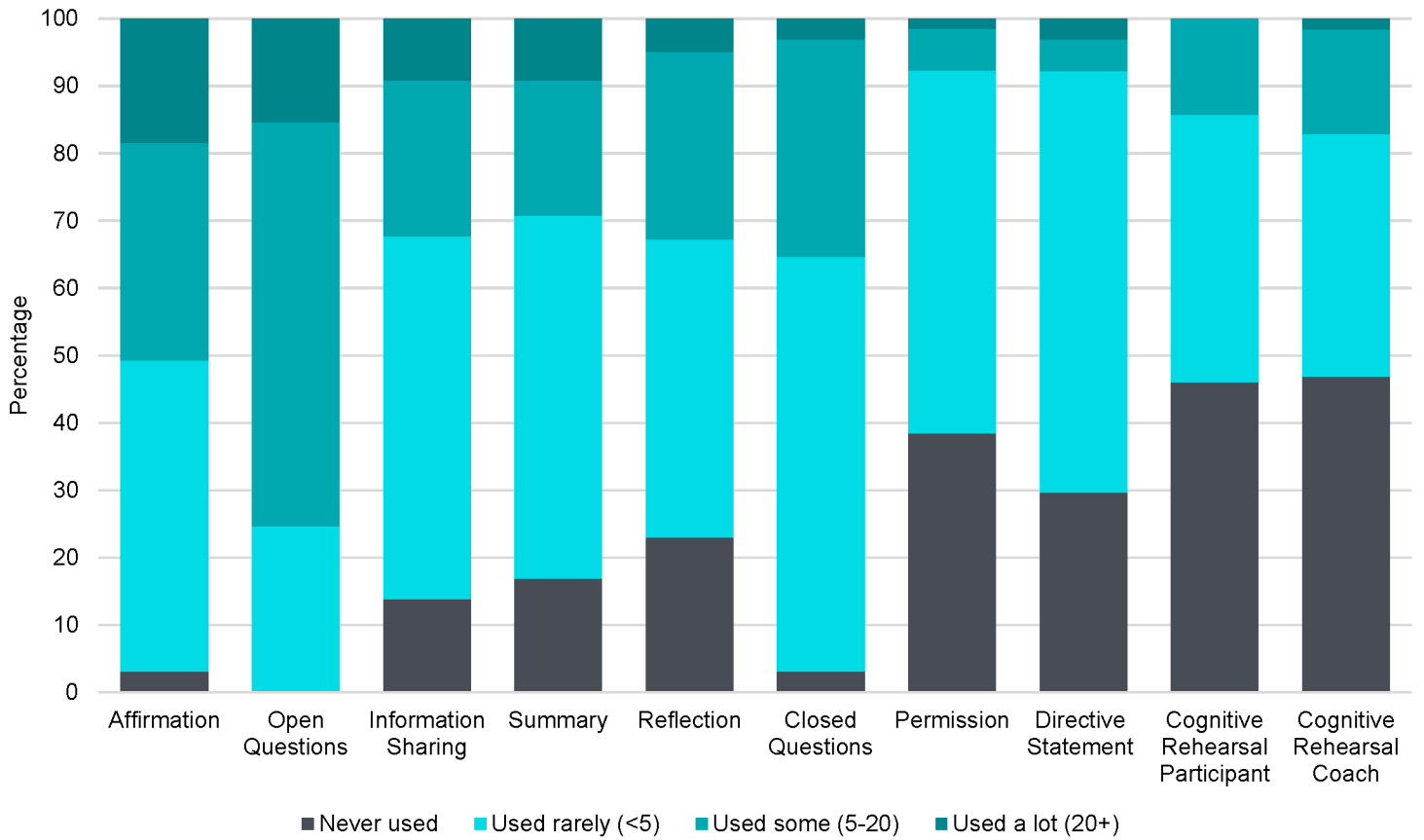
Because case managers are expected to use reflections frequently, this indicates mixed improvement in coaching implementation over time. Case managers are also expected to ask for permission frequently, but the frequency of asking for permission varied across the three pro-

¹ The team included cycle-level outcomes for Housing Opportunities Commission and Jewish Family & Children's Service. However, the team analyzed Children's Home and Aid's observation data at the aggregate level because the program did not have a cohort structure, and fathers were enrolled on an ongoing basis.

grams and changed across cycles. Observations of case managers at the programs at Housing Opportunities Commission and Jewish Family & Children's Service show the frequency of asking for permission increasing in some cases and decreasing in others across the cycles, again indicating mixed changes in fidelity to coaching over time. Appendix Figures L.2–L.5 illustrate that case managers at Housing Opportunities Commission asked for permission slightly more frequently in later cycles, which points to an improvement in coaching implementation over time. Appendix Figures L.6–L.9 show that case managers at Jewish Family & Children's Service asked for permission less frequently across cycles, which illustrates a decrease in coaching fidelity over time.

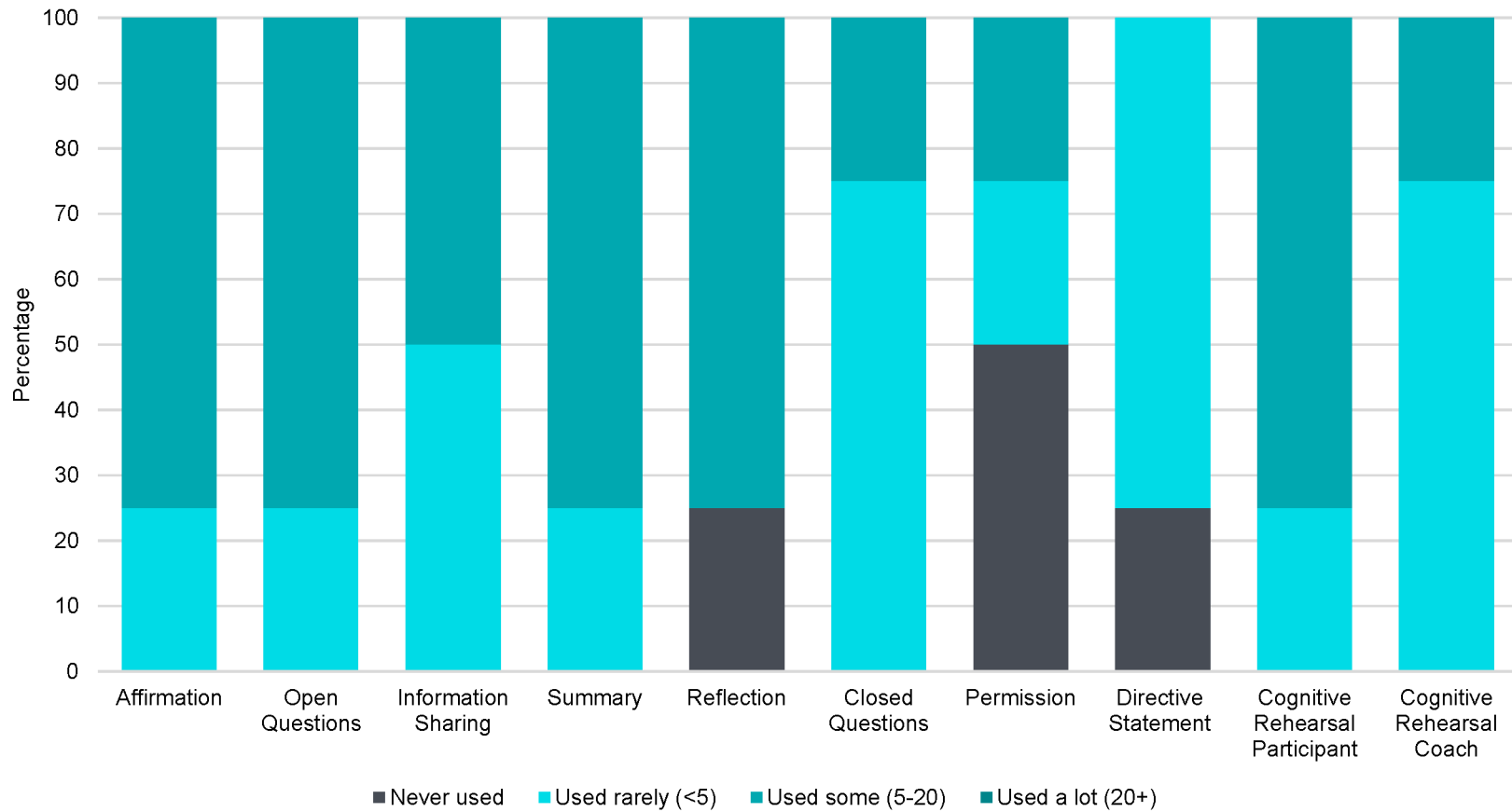
Data on the use of coaching techniques are summarized in Appendix Figures L.1 (Children's Home & Aid), L.2 (Housing Opportunities Commission), and L.3 (Jewish Family & Children's Service).

APPENDIX FIGURE L.1 Children’s Home & Aid: Total Frequency of Coaching Techniques



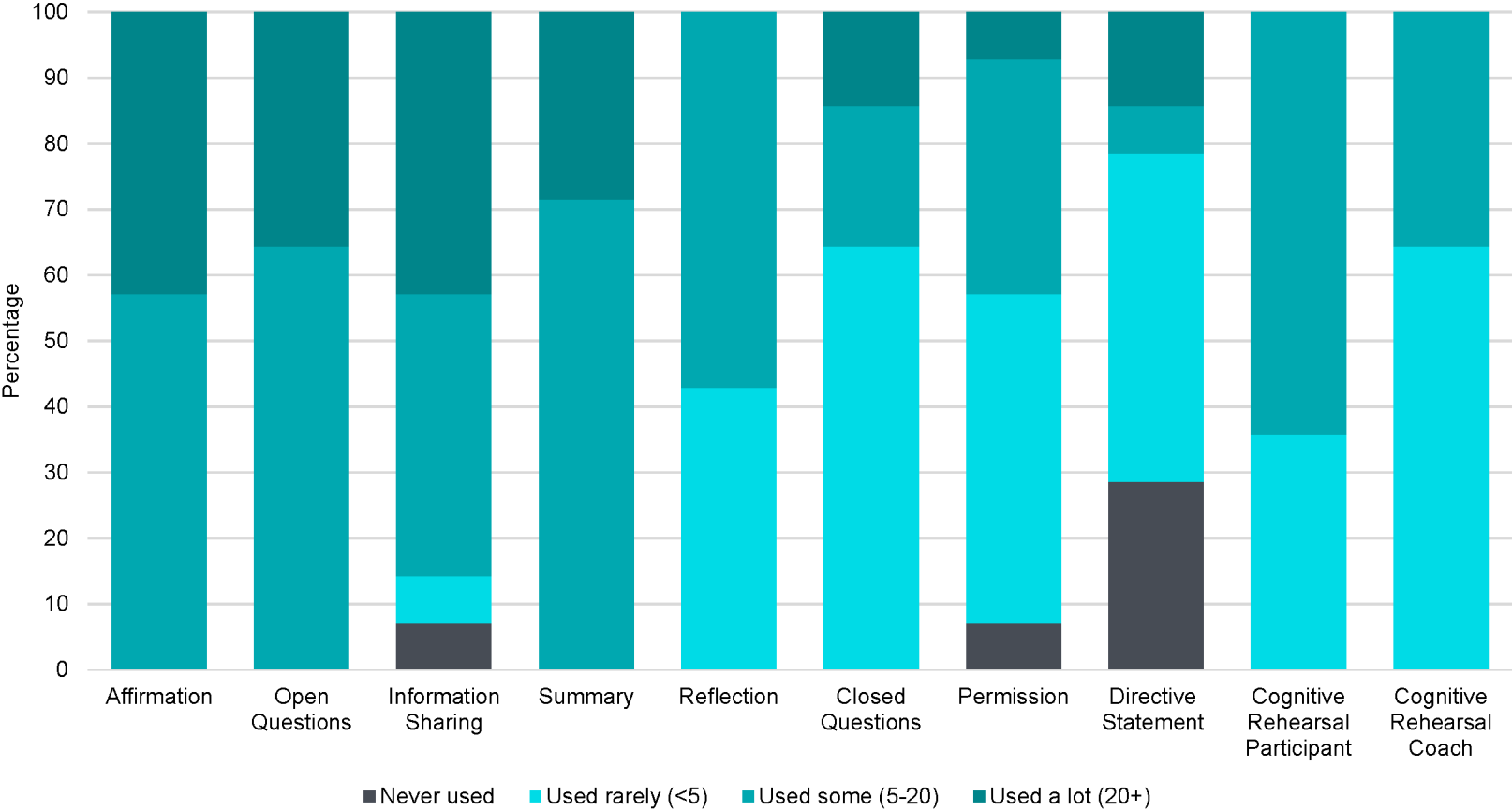
SOURCE: Children’s Home and Aid observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.2 Housing Opportunities Commission:
Cycle 1 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



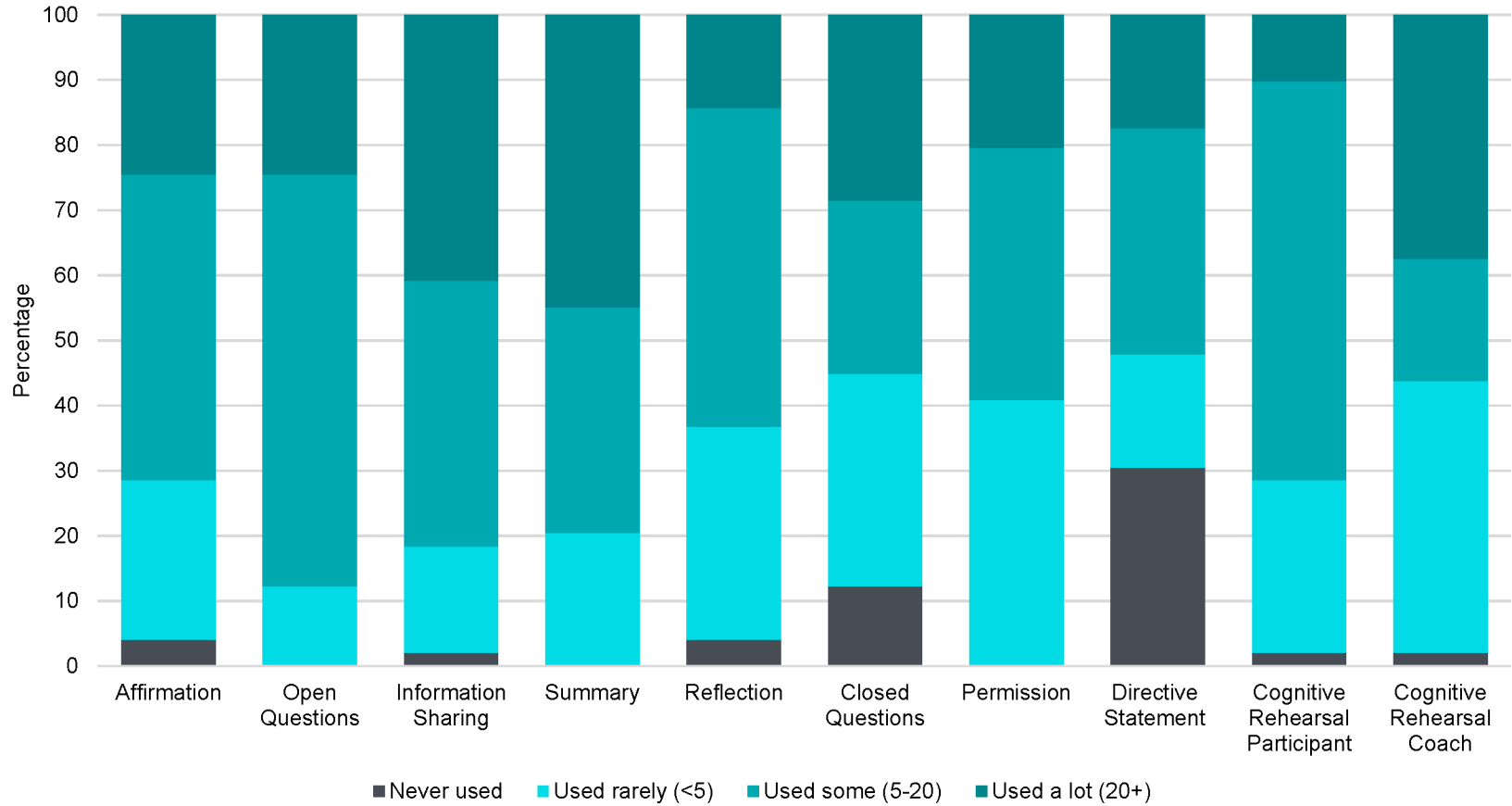
SOURCE: Housing Opportunities Commission observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.3 Housing Opportunities Commission:
Cycle 2 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



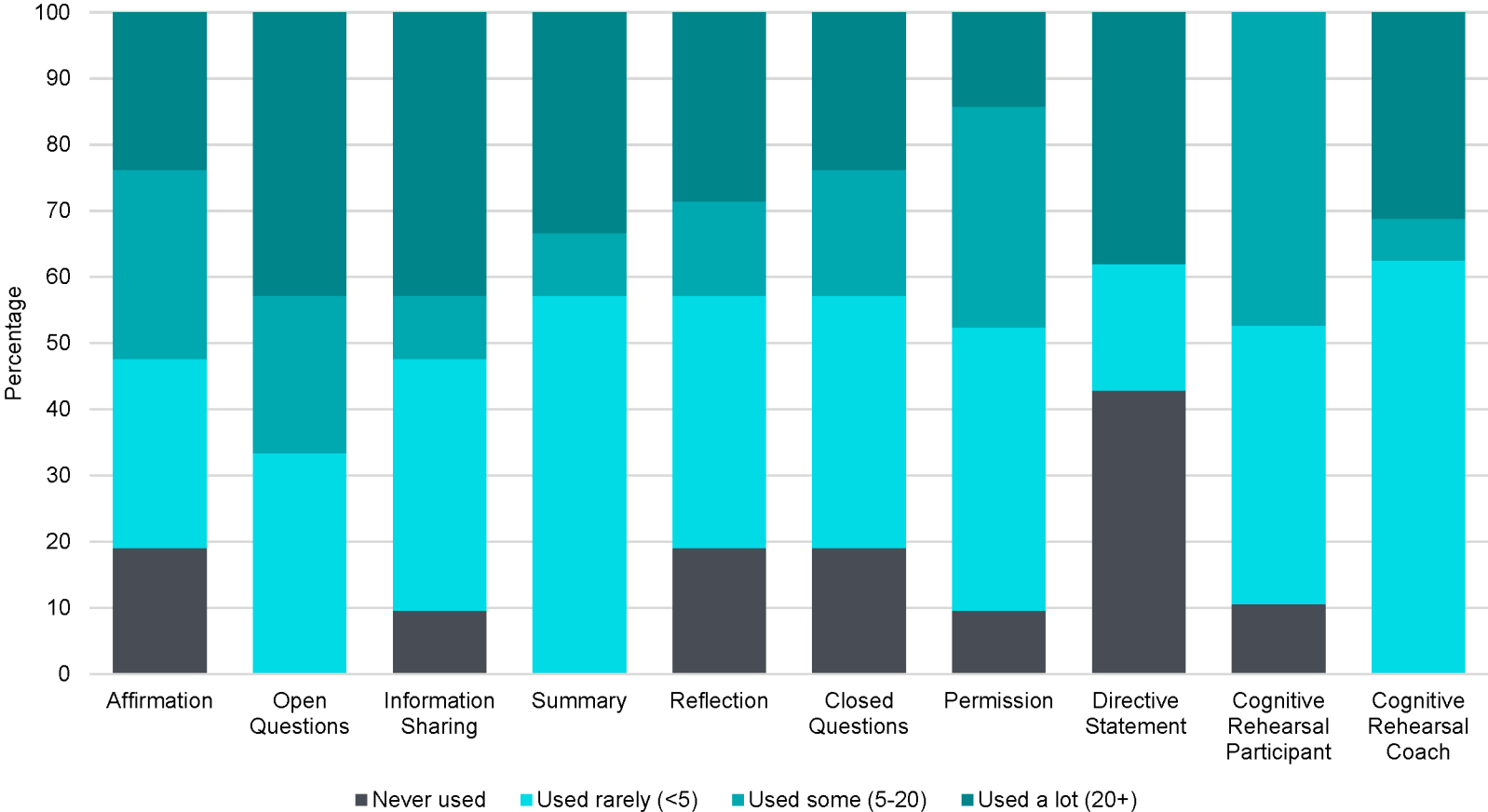
SOURCE: Housing Opportunities Commission observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.4 Housing Opportunities Commission:
Cycle 3 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



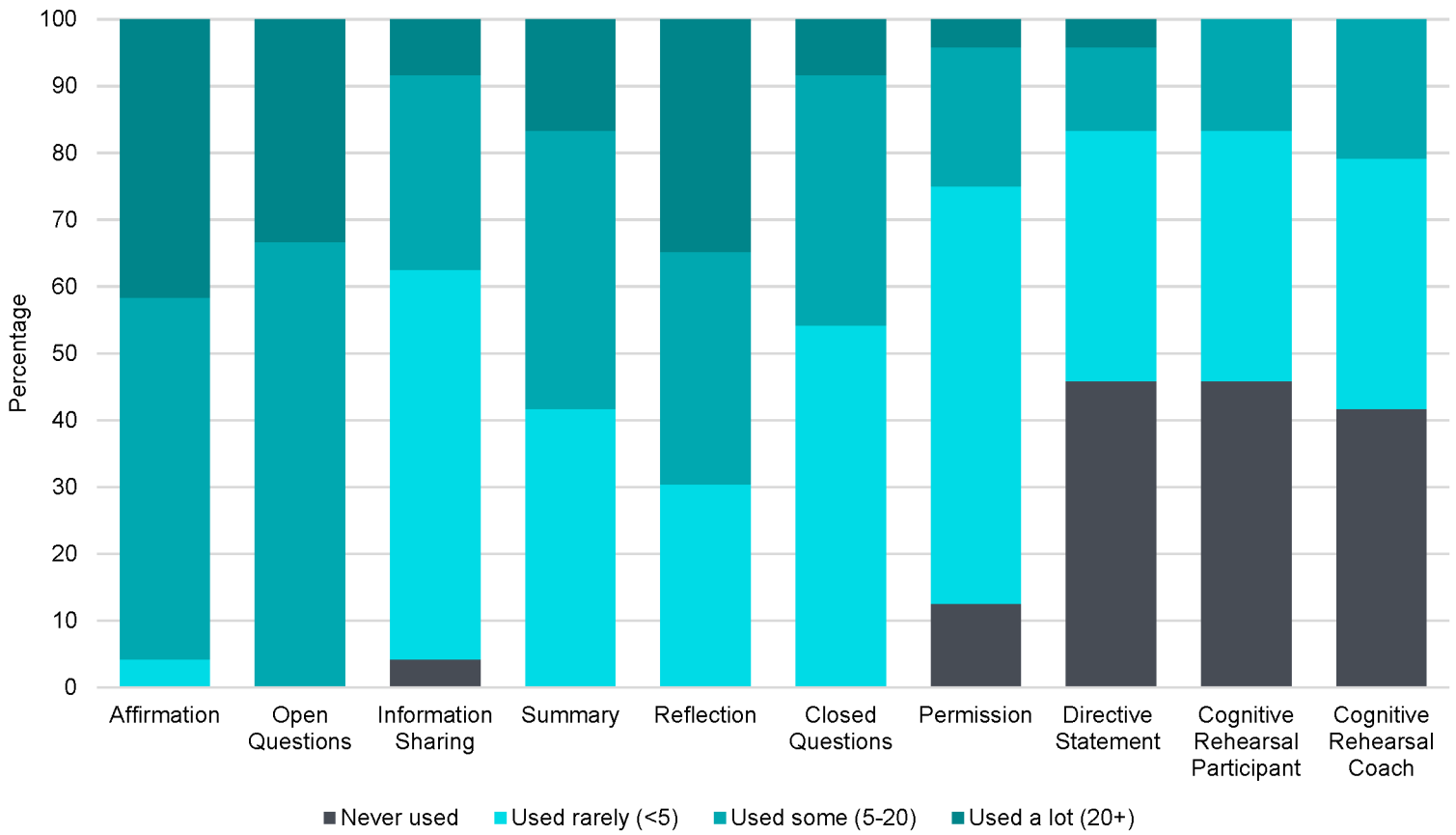
SOURCE: Housing Opportunities Commission observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.5 Housing Opportunities Commission:
Cycle 4 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



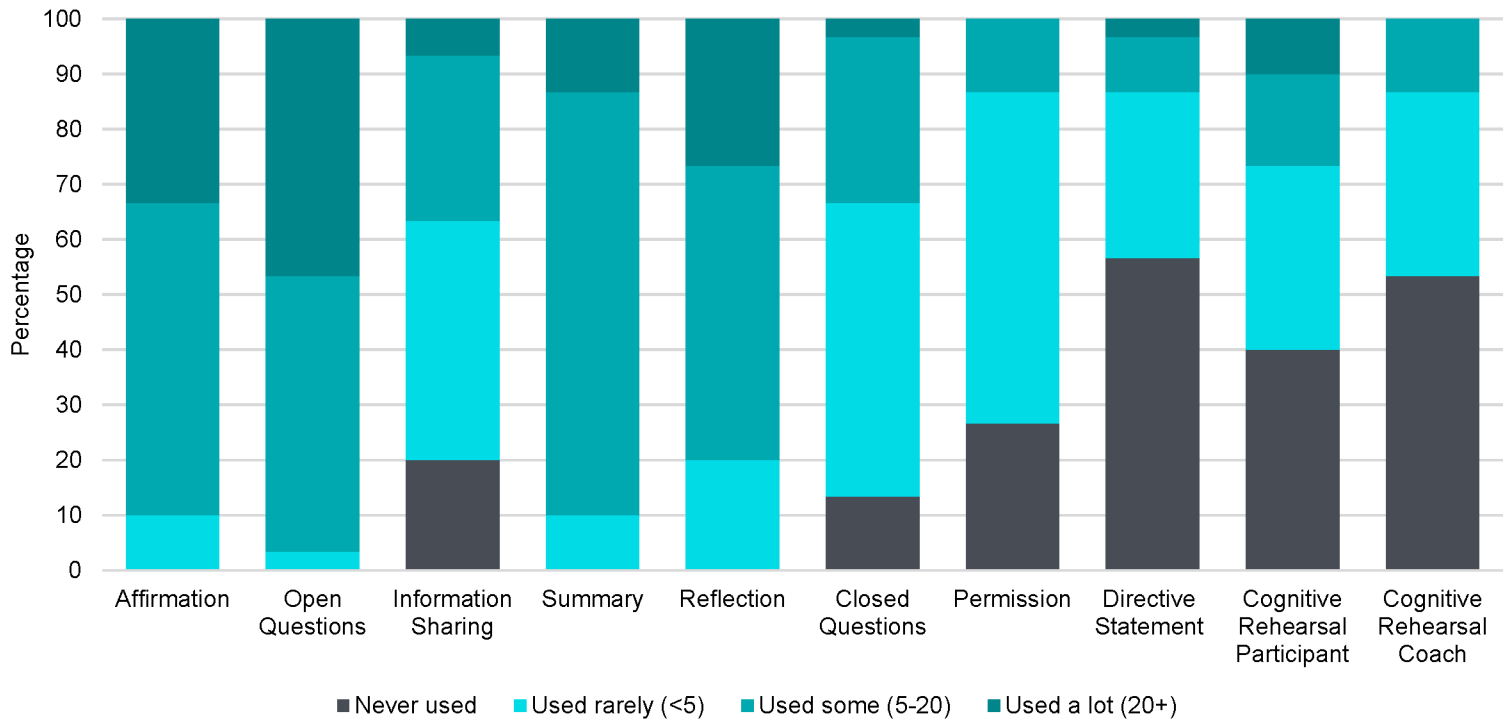
SOURCE: Housing Opportunities Commission observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.6 Jewish Family & Children’s Service:
Cycle 1 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



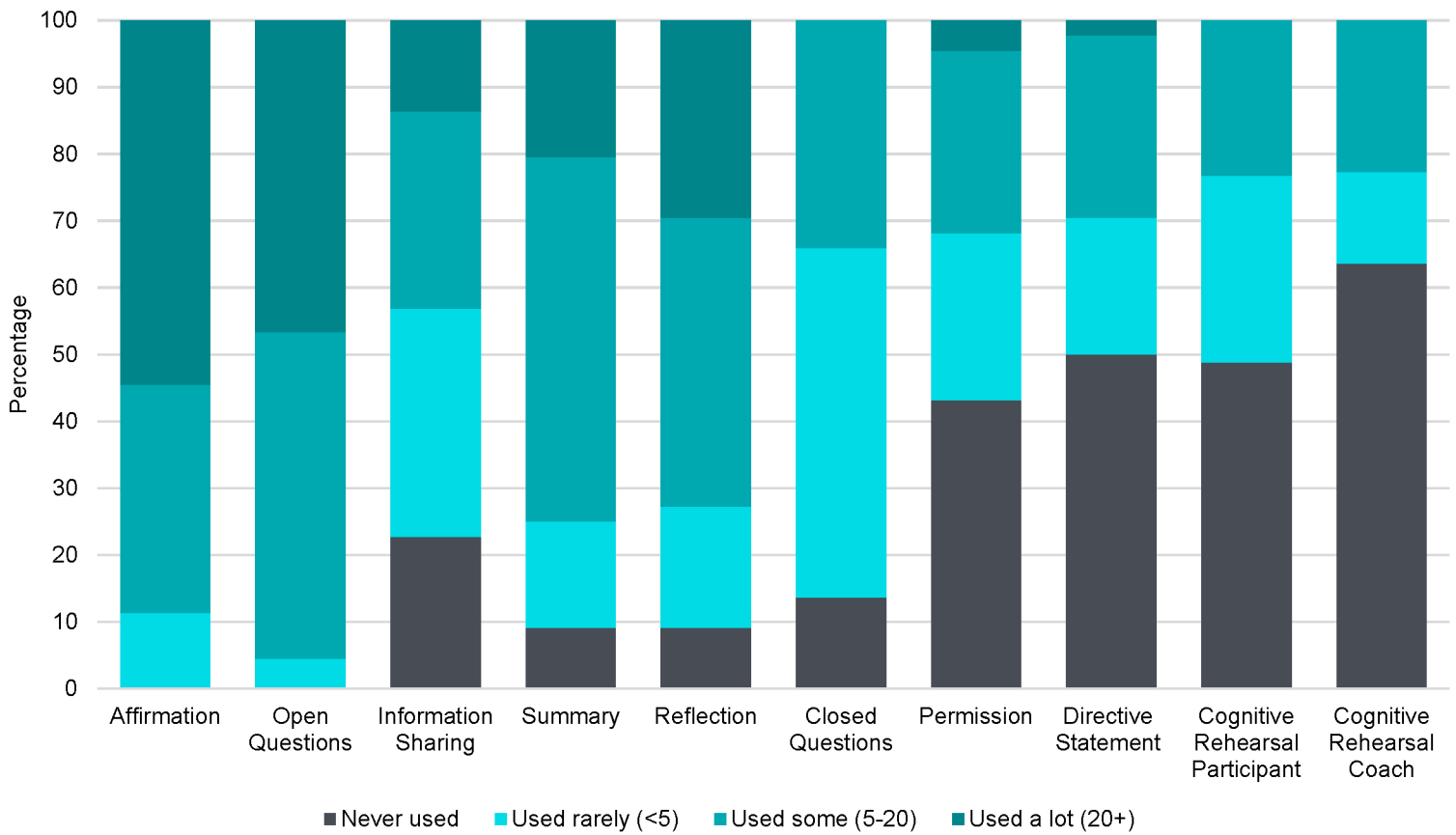
SOURCE: Jewish Family & Children’s Service observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.7 Jewish Family & Children’s Service:
Cycle 2 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



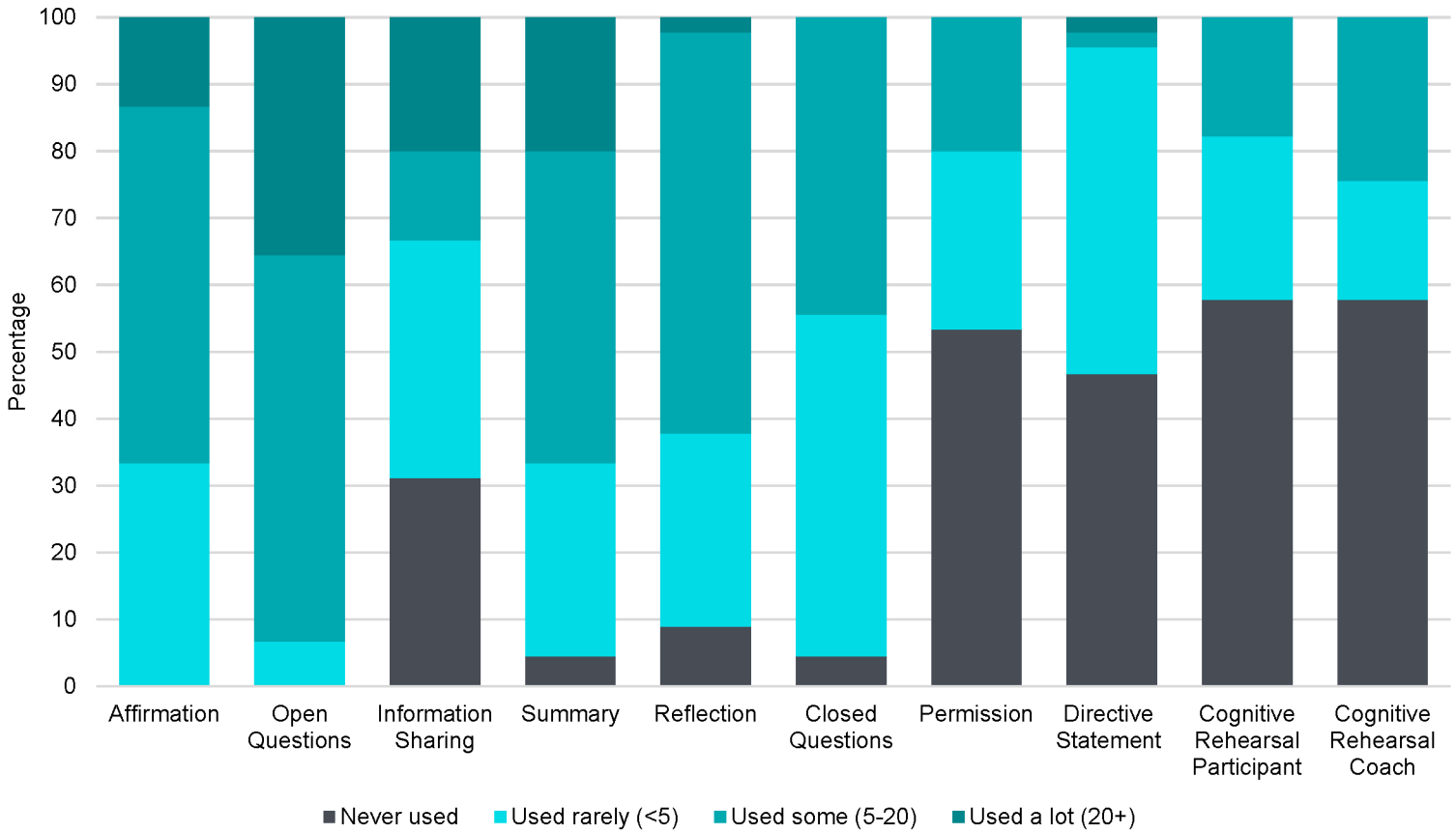
SOURCE: Jewish Family & Children’s Service observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.8 Jewish Family & Children’s Service:
Cycle 3 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



SOURCE: Jewish Family & Children’s Service observation data.

APPENDIX FIGURE L.9 Jewish Family & Children’s Service:
Cycle 4 Frequency of Coaching Techniques



SOURCE: Jewish Family & Children’s Service observation data.

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