

# DADS Family Project: An Experiential Group Approach to Support Fathers in Their Relationships with Their Children

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**ABSTRACT.** The use of group interventions with parents to prevent child maltreatment and to support positive parenting has been demonstrated to be effective. This article describes an experiential group approach to working with fathers in diverse settings. The format provides both content about parenting and a context for fathers to develop their own “voice” as parent through a combination of leader directed parenting education and opportunities for participant fathers to build positive supportive relationships with one another. In this article, the curriculum for this group approach is described, with specific examples of resources that are used in each stage of the group. In addition, findings from an evaluation conducted with fathers in a correctional setting who took part in the program are discussed. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2005 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

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### *INTRODUCTION*

Children today are growing up in families with different structural arrangements than those of earlier generations (Teachman, Tedrow, and Crowder, 2000; Brown, 2004). For example, the number of children born of single parents has grown substantially in the past 30 years. The percentage of single parent households grew from 11% in 1970 to 24% in 1990 and 27% in 1998. By 1995, 25% of White children, 41% of Hispanic children, and 70% of African American children were born to single mothers (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998). In the three years between 1995 and 1998, the number of single father households had increased by 25%, from 1.7 to 2.1 million, while the number of single mother households had remained stable at 9.8 million (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002). The proportion of children residing with two biological parents has been decreasing, while the number of children living with stepparents or in homes where their parent(s) is in a cohabiting relationship has been increasing (Brown, 2004).

In spite of these dramatic changes, however, there is some suggestion in the research that family structure, the composition of members in a family household, in itself may not predict well-being in children. It appears that multiple changes in living arrangements (i.e., separations, comings and goings) rather than the actual structure of the family are strong predictors of negative effects on the well-being of children (Dembo and Cox, 2000; Teachman et al., 2000). These harmful effects appear to be true both in the context of marriages ending and in the blending of families (Teachman et al., 2000). In addition, Brown (2004) examined data from the 1999 National Survey of America's Families ( $n = 35,938$ ) and reported that capacities such as the psychological well-being of parents versus the frustration they endure, or the economic resources of the family were key determinants of how families of various structures fared and coped with the behavioral and emotional problems of young children (ages 6-11). In addition, role expectations for fathers have changed (Yeung, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, and Hofferth, 2001). Fathers are expected to be more involved with raising their children than in previous generations. This changed expectation may rest largely upon the shifts in the percentage of mothers who work outside of the home. In 1980, less than 50% of mothers with pre-school aged children were in the labor force. By 2001, 64% of this group of mothers was

either employed or looking for work (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). If fathers do not respond to these adjustments, what will happen?

As fathers adjust to an increase of working mothers, changes in how fathers interact with their children have been noted. For example, in one study researchers examined the amount of time fathers in intact families spent with their children (Yeung et al., 2001). They performed a secondary analysis of data that was collected as part of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, which included a sample of over 1,700 children between the ages of birth-12 who lived with both parents. The authors described the demographic characteristics of the sample as being nationally representative (p. 138). According to time diaries completed by the parents, during weekdays fathers were found to participate with their children between 60% and 82% of the time that mothers spent with their children. In contrast, during weekends fathers were engaged with their children between 80% and 94% of the time that mothers were. In both time periods fathers engaged primarily in play and companionship activities. In fact, children in that study spent “slightly more time engaged in play and companionship activities with their fathers on weekends than with their mothers” (p. 146).

Bulanda’s (2004) study about gender ideologies and paternal involvement examined what individuals viewed as appropriate roles for men and women, the proportion of time that fathers in comparison with their wives spent with their children, and the breadth of activities that the fathers participated in along with their children. He drew on data from two waves of the National Survey of Families and Households and found that fathers’ egalitarian views about gender roles influenced their own involvement with their children, but that the gender ideologies of the mothers were not influential in this area.

Research suggests that the type of father-child involvement rather than the amount of time spent is a better predictor of child well-being or adjustment. In a study of relationships between fathers and their children, Veneziano and Rohner (1998) used self-report instruments to measure fathers’ involvement and children’s well-being. Fathers’ involvement was measured by self-report of socialization responsibility, availability, and power in decision making. Children assessed for their own aggression, independence, self-esteem, responsiveness, and stability. The researchers found that fathers’ involvement was not related to their children’s adjustment. Only the child’s perceptions about their paternal acceptance, as measured by subscales assessing warmth/affection, hostility/aggression, indifference/neglect, and undifferentiated

rejection, were related to the well-being of the children. In a meta-analysis of forty-three similar studies that examined the psychological adjustment or well-being of children, Khaleque and Rohner (2002) found that there was a strong large effect size (.52 for mothers and .53 for fathers) relating the children's perceptions of parental acceptance-rejection and the children's well-being. In another meta-analysis, Amato and Gilbreth (1999) examined the predictors of children's well-being when fathers did not live with their children. The authors reported that the frequency of contacts between the fathers and their children did not influence child well-being, defined as academic achievement or the absence of externalizing or internalizing problems. However, three variables were related to the adjustment of children: (1) fathers' payment of child support; (2) authoritative parenting (non-coercive); and (3) feelings of closeness as reported by both the father and child.

The value of group interventions that emphasize new knowledge about child development, practicing positive discipline skills, and increasing knowledge of and access to community resources is well documented (Thomas, Leicht, Hughes, Madigan, and Dowell, 2005). One of the challenges in assisting fathers to become effective parents is to shift away from a deficit perspective about fathers. Hawkins and Dollahite (1997) point out an all too common perception about fathering: that it is a social role that men generally do not perform adequately. They, and several other authors, suggest that a shift in focus is needed, from a deficit model of what fathers do poorly, to an asset model of what they do well. Doherty et al. (1998) and Parke (2000) provide ecological models of fathering that focus on: (1) the interactions in different social contexts, (2) the relationship between the father and mother, (3) the attitudes and skills of the father, and (4) the relationship between the father and child.

Consistent with an asset-based perspective, Palm (1997) suggests that the goals for such parenting programs should include the values of the fathers toward parenting, commitment of the fathers to that role, an appreciation of the developmental needs of various age children, and ways that fathers can develop and maintain close nurturing relationships with their children. Strug and Wilmore-Schaeffer (2003) found that reducing stereotypically negative views of fathers, and especially non-custodial fathers, is essential for social workers to work effectively with them.

This article describes and evaluates a program that focuses on the assets of fathers. The *Dads Actively Developing Stable Families Family Project* (DADS) is a program designed to help fathers develop new

attitudes toward parenting and to teach them new parenting skills. It incorporates a teaching style that is involved, experiential, and exciting. In the next section of this article, the history of the DADS Family Project is provided, followed by a detailed description of each session in the program. Finally, evaluation data that supports its use with fathers from diverse backgrounds is provided.

### ***HISTORY***

The DADS Family Project is an innovative program that is designed to adapt to a variety of settings, from schools and churches to prisons and businesses. The purpose of the program is to assist dads to improve their understanding of the essential role of fathering. It is critical that the program be presented in a supportive gathering of fathers. Traditionally, parent education has been offered in mixed groups composed of mothers and fathers. The DADS Family Project is based on the belief that in a setting with only fathers present, men will more readily and actively participate.

The DADS Family Project was created in 1996 (Barlow and Cleveland, 1996). It is based on the belief that in a supportive learning environment fathers can be inspired, empowered, and enabled, through skill building techniques, to gain mastery and confidence in their role as parent.

The initial funding of the DADS Family Project came from a Family Support/Family Preservation Grant from the Florida Department of Children and Families in 1997. Since then, support has come from many sources and the project has expanded across the southeastern United States. DADS was initially provided in a community setting. Seventeen fathers and thirty-two children participated in a twenty-four hour program. During that same year, a program was offered at a state prison. Twenty-five inmates participated in a twelve-hour program. Since then, more than 3,360 fathers have participated in the program in twenty-four different settings. In the next section, the format of the program and examples of exercises are provided.

### ***PROGRAM DESCRIPTION***

The DADS project relies on group process and experiential activities to achieve its goals. The format is more consistent with a

psychoeducational approach (Roffman, 2004) than a formal educational approach (Sands and Solomon, 2003) that is often used in parent education programs. The goals for each father include: recognition of his potential positive impact on his children; improvement in his attitude of wanting to be an equal parent; development of a personal model of fatherhood as a “generative” dad; an understanding of the meaning and strategies for establishing a safe, secure, predictable, and reliable home environment; an appreciation of the value of play for children and strategies for playing; and improvement of skills of communication, stress management, and discipline. The curriculum utilizes a self-efficacy model (SE) to enable fathers to lower anxiety, experience a sense of accomplishment, and maintain high level of effort. The learning strategies include utilizing group interaction, modeling by facilitators, and verbal persuasion. Instructors are encouraged to self-disclose. Role-plays and the use of multimedia resources (e.g., popular videos) add to a fast-paced atmosphere. Fathers learn from and support one another in a context that allows for building trust and promoting community spirit. In this way, the power of a mutual aid (Steinberg, 1997) is tapped, with all group members being viewed as having valuable information to provide and the Hcapacity to support the other fathers in the group.

Throughout, session leaders attempt to project sensitivity for the specific life context of each father. This sensitivity has been especially important in working with fathers from diverse ethnic backgrounds and social contexts. Miller (1997), in his work with African American parents in child welfare systems, and Fagan and Stevenson (1995), in their parenting programs with African American fathers in Head Start, assert that parenting programs need to address the context within which the service is being provided. For example, in DADS groups that have been conducted in African American churches, the issues raised about fathering differed from those raised in correctional settings.

Judgmental reactions by participants are reframed as reflections of needs to be better understood and addressed. As the facilitators strive to promote an open atmosphere, they discourage such judging. The eight sessions of two-and-a-half hours each are developmental in nature. Group meetings move from establishing basic trust through promoting individuation of each dad having his own unique approach to fathering. A brief description of each session is provided below, along with examples that have been shared by fathers over the past seven years.

*Session I. DADS Actively Developing Self.* In the first session, fathers are led through a process of recalling their history of being fathered, sharing about the birth of their children, and eventually establishing a

personal model of fatherhood. Fathers learn that regardless of their positive or negative history of being fathered, the process impacted them as they formed a model for becoming a father. This lesson was well illustrated by a father who told his story of never having been acknowledged by his father even though his mother had introduced them when he was twelve years of age. He recounted the pain of repeated denials by his father of paternity even though there was an undeniable physical resemblance. When asked about the meaning of this story to him, he emphatically stated, "All five of my children know who I am, even if I have never lived with them." At the time, he was in prison, but he did share letters and telephone calls with his children.

*Session II. DADS Actively Developing Safety and Sensitivity.* During session two, a house is drawn and divided into four rooms to portray the need for children to experience an environment that is safe, secure, predictable, and reliable. These four concepts are illustrated and defined through participating in role-playing activities, discussing current news stories, and viewing relevant videos. *Safe* is defined as *free from physical harm*. *Secure* is defined as *what children experience emotionally when they feel safe with parents*. *Predictable* is defined as *knowing what to expect*. In unsafe homes, it is explained; children feel on edge and learn to be hyper-vigilant. *Reliable* is defined as *children trusting that parents can be counted on behaviorally and emotionally*. The foundation of the house is built upon the concepts of *love* and *commitment*, and the attic and roof is comprised of *rule-making* coupled with *parental guidance*.

A ten-year-old at-risk child is depicted in one of the videos to help the dads examine the consequences of an environment that is not safe, secure, predictable, and reliable. This child who was exposed to domestic violence, alcohol abuse, the suicide of her father, and poverty, illustrates in dramatic terms the impact that the environment can have on a child's life. During this session a basic review of child development is provided to help the fathers to better anticipate the changing needs of their children as they mature through successive stages. *Discipline* is introduced as an important component of responsive parenting. It is tied to gaining an understanding of how children develop the capacity for self-regulation.

*Session III. DADS Actively Developing Play Skills.* Session three begins by reading one or two books to the fathers. It is unlikely that these men have experienced anyone reading children's books to them in many years, but it is a powerful method to set an atmosphere for playful interaction. Fathers remember their favorite toys while being led

through art exercises. Participants are taught that not all play stimulates the same part of the brain. Playfully throwing a nerf ball evokes a change in mood in the room as compared to book reading. For example, participants see that they can introduce new rules such as throwing the ball to each other rather than back to the facilitator. Fathers are further led to explore creative play by writing poems or songs about their children. The culmination of this session is to have fathers divide into teams and create a machine. They become the parts of the machine demonstrating movement and sounds as they show the other teams their creation. This assignment illustrates team-building experiences, reinforcing the fathers' bonds with one another.

When the program is presented in community settings, in the subsequent meeting, fathers bring their children to participate in the process. Their new play skills then become the foundation for a series of assignments for the fathers to carry out with their children. These include scavenger hunts, parachute games, arts and crafts, and child-led play times. At this point in the process group workers often observe fathers, who had previously complained of strained relationships with their children, discovering new and non-threatening methods of bonding.

*Session IV. DADS Actively Developing Communication Skills.* Communication seems easy—all parents and children talk. But how effectively are the dads able to differentiate what may be communicated on the surface (manifest content) from deeper meaning and feelings (latent content)? One activity that is used to learn about communication obstacles is the game, “pass the message.” The fathers are divided into groups of eight to fifteen participants. A written message is given to the first dad who must memorize it and whisper the message to the next dad. The message is passed on as a verbal message only. After each group completes the task, messages received are compared. Of course, the message that the first father in each group communicated is not the same message as the one that the last father of each group received. The central theme of teaching communication is on developing the skill of reflective listening. Fathers are taught how to distinguish between surface content and deeper meaning. Fathers are reminded that simple tasks like putting the newspaper down and muting the television aid effective listening. Fathers learn about utilizing non-threatening body postures when discussing topics with their children.

*Session V. DADS Actively Developing Stress Management Skills.* How do different people define stress? This is the beginning of understanding that which is stressful to one father and family may not be stressful to another father and family. Participants are taught about

some of the properties of stress—it is cumulative, it is correlated with change whether the change is desired or unexpected, and it may lead to explosive behaviors. A model of stress is diagramed and explained to fathers by studying a real-life family portrayed on a documentary. In that story participants observe how stress can lead to family deterioration through a father's drug use and family violence. A son discloses how his father's behaviors affected him dramatically. Yet this family finds a way to successfully overcome the problems. Participants are then instructed to personalize the concepts and skills that they learned in the session, by devising an action plan for their better managing stress in their family.

*Session VI. DADS Actively Developing Effective Discipline Skills.* Discipline seems to be what all parents want to quickly focus on in any parenting course. Nevertheless, by first understanding the concepts of bonding, family atmosphere, communication, child development, and stress management, a foundation for successful discipline can be built. Myths about discipline are discussed: discipline is about punishment, discipline is about parental control, and spanking provides long-term behavior change. Fathers brainstorm about long-term parental goals for their children: to become self-supporting, self-regulating, responsible, and effective decision-makers. Discipline brings these goals to fruition. Discipline is about teaching. Fathers learn through role-playing activities and exercises on how to utilize natural and logical consequences as means of effective discipline.

*Session VII. DADS Actively Developing Experiential Skills.* This session provides a lab in the community settings for demonstrating what fathers have learned thus far. Fathers bring their children to this meeting regardless of the children's ages. Fathers are guided through exercises and interactions with their children, and they each observe their child's manner of interacting. One father who had been in family therapy with his thirteen-year-old son, due to violent conflict between them, enjoyed the time so much that he stayed around well past the end of the session. It was observed that during one game the two of them ended up playfully falling on each other. This was probably the first non-hurtful touch either one of them had experienced in years.

*Session VIII. DADS Actively Developing Experiential Skills.* This session is a celebration and thus occurs at the final meeting. Fathers graduate from the course and are recognized by their entire family. Families join together in activities that solidify each dad's improved skills and attitude shift related to increasing participation with their children. Usually this is a time of enjoying a meal of some sort with the

group. It is essential to honor the fathers for their participation in the course if lasting changes are to be expected. Therefore, certificates are professionally printed so that any father will desire to frame it and mount it at home or in his office. If the course is taught in an incarceration setting, there is no mention of that setting anywhere on the certificate. In an effort to validate and affirm the fathers' efforts, the certificate reads, "Out of love for his family (name of father) has completed the DADS Family Project."

### ***EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM***

In this section a detailed summary of an evaluation of the DADS Project is provided, which was completed with fathers who were incarcerated in a state prison system and were selected to participate by prison officials.

*Participants.* In that project, sixty-three fathers participated in one of two ways; one group took part in the program face-to-face and the other group through distance learning. For the distance learning group, audio-video simultaneous broadcast was used, from one prison where a group was participating live to another prison, where a classroom manager was present whose responsibility was to distribute materials for the class and oversee classroom order.

Forty-six fathers participated face-to-face in the DADS Program in live sessions in three different facilities, and seventeen fathers participated at a distance. The demographic characteristics of the participants who took part in live sessions were not significantly different from those who participated via video conferencing. Overall, demographically, the average age of the participants was 33.8 (7.24), with the age range from 20 to 57. Twenty-five percent ( $n = 16$ ) were never married, 27% ( $n = 17$ ) were married, and 36% ( $n = 23$ ) were divorced. Eleven percent ( $n = 7$ ) of this group reported being separated.

In this group of fathers, family income was reported to range from under \$10,000 (34%;  $n = 21$ ) to over \$40,000 (20%;  $n = 13$ ), with 17% ( $n = 11$ ) between \$10,000 and \$20,000, 10% ( $n = 6$ ) between \$20,000 and \$30,000, and 20% between \$30,000 and \$40,000. These fathers reported that 35% ( $n = 22$ ) had not completed high school, while 59% ( $n = 37$ ) had completed high school or vocational training. Four men (7%) reported having attended college.

The participants reported an average of 3.2 children, with a range of one to ten children. Seventy percent ( $n = 43$ ) had three or fewer children.

*Measures.* To assess the effects of the DADS training on participants' knowledge and attitudes about their roles as parents, a standardized questionnaire and a structured qualitative interview were used. The standardized questionnaire was the Fathers' PARI Q4 (Parental Attitude Research Instrument) (Schludermann and Schludermann, 1977). The total measure is 115 items, and includes a number of sub-scales both about dad's relationship with his children and about his relationship with his spouse. Since the length of the measure was excessive for this study and the sub-scales that focused on marital relationship were not appropriate for this project, a total of eight five-item sub-scales were selected, plus another five-item sub-scale to assess social desirability.

The eight sub-scales selected were designed to assess the following dimensions: Encouraging Verbalization, Fostering Independence, Permitting Child's Self-Expression, Avoiding Harsh Punishment, Non-Punishment, Avoiding Strictness, Encouraging Emotional Expression, and Change Orientation. In the report published by the developers of the scale, all of the sub-scales are described as having adequate internal consistency (Schludermann and Schludermann, 1977). In addition to the forty-five-item questionnaire, each inmate completed a short demographic sheet.

A structured qualitative interview was designed specifically for this project, and focused on the participants' experience of the training. Four inmates from the distance learning group were randomly selected at the end of the project and were interviewed.

*Procedure.* Four classes of three hours each (12 hours total) were held at three correctional institutions. Simultaneously, with the course being taught at one of the institutions, participants at a fourth institution interacted with the class by means of video and audio linkage. Parenting manuals were provided to each inmate in all locations who participated in the classes. In addition to the parenting manual, the group leaders followed the format detailed in the DADS Family Project manual (Barlow and Cleveland, 1996). Small group activities, experiential exercises, and audio-visual aids were used in the class presentations. All of the participants who completed the classes and took the pre- and post-test measures ( $n = 63$ ) were provided with a certificate of completion. Copies of the certificates were provided to Office of Classification at each institution, to be placed in inmate files.

The questionnaire was completed by participants prior to the first meeting and at the end of the last meeting. At each facility, the trainers monitored the data collection process, except at distance training site where a classroom teacher observed the data collection. The data was

entered into SPSS and that software program was used for the following data analyses. The content of the qualitative interviews was hand and audio recorded during the interview, and summarized in this report.

*Data Analysis.* Two statistical procedures were used to assess the effect of the training on the fathers' attitudes about parenting. First a nonparametric test for differences was made between the responses to the PARI by the participants at the live training with those at the distance site (see Table 1). This test was done to assess if any differences existed as a result of the distance learning condition. There were significant differences at time one in the scores on four of the eight sub-scales, with participants at a distance having less positive scores than those in the face-to-face group.

The second test was designed to answer the question about the effect of the training on the attitudes of the participants. A repeated measures Wilcoxon nonparametric test was used to answer this question (see Table 2). Overall, the responses of the fathers were consistent with significant improvements in their scores from time 1 to time 2 in three of the eight substantive scales, with no significant differences found for social desirability. The three scales that showed significant improvement were: Permitting Self Expression, Avoiding Harsh Punishment, and No Physical Punishment. Separate tests then were done for the two types of sites. Overall, participants in the distance education format had significant changes in the three subscales, while the participants in the face-to-face format had changes only in the Avoiding Harsh Punishment subscale. As indicated above, the participants who took part in the video feed format were more likely to have less positive scores initially, which could account for some of the significant change.

Judging from the data analysis, changes in scores about fathering after participating in this training are consistent with the group model having a positive influence on the participants. However, without a control or comparison group, the findings need to be interpreted with caution.

In summary, the findings are consistent with participation in this program having a positive influence on the participants' attitudes about fathering. For men who participated in the group via video conferencing, the scores of the participants improved in three of the eight areas assessed in the predicted direction (Permitting Self Expression, Avoiding Harsh Punishment, and Not Using Physical Punishment). For those who participated in a face-to-face format, the changes were less dramatic, with significant changes only in Avoiding Harsh Punishment.

TABLE 1. Parenting Attitudes of Participants in DADS Training, Department of Corrections 1999

Parenting Variables	Comparison Distance to face-to-face (Z scores)
Encourage verbalization	
Time 1	-2.4*
Time 2	-1.8
Foster independence	
Time 1	-2.2*
Time 2	-0.7
Permit self-expression	
Time 1	-1.9
Time 2	-0.1
Avoid harsh punishment	
Time 1	-3.4*
Time 2	-1.5
Non-physical punishment	
Time 1	-1.8
Time 2	-0.8
Avoid strictness	
Time 1	-1.2
Time 2	-0.8
Encourage emotional expression	
Time 1	-2.1*
Time 2	-0.2
Orient to change	
Time 1	-1.3
Time 2	-0.7
Social desirability	
Time 1	-0.9
Time 2	-0.02

\*Z score;  $p < .05$ 

### ***DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION***

The DADS project has served as a useful tool to assist fathers to develop their own voice as a parent for their children. Current evidence is consistent with the belief that the fathers who participated in the

TABLE 2. Non-Parametric Repeated Measures Comparison of PARI in DOC DADS Training

Parenting Variables	Total Sample (n = 63)	Face-to-Face 1 (n = 46)	Distance (n = 17)
Encourage verbalization	0.70	1.31	.50
Foster independence	0.83	0.34	.95
Permit self expression	2.90*	1.54	2.87*
Avoid harsh punishment	3.81*	2.61*	3.01*
Nonphysical punishment	2.88*	1.83	2.78*
Avoid strictness	0.99	0.30	1.44
Encourage emotional expression	1.38	0.63	1.73
Orient to change	1.47	0.85	1.34
Social desirability	1.30	0.59	1.58

\*Z score;  $p < .05$

program increased their awareness about what a child needs from a father.

*Limitations of the Evaluation.* From a research standpoint, there are several limitations to the evaluation. First, the changes that have been measured have been in self-reported attitudes, rather than observable changes in parenting behavior. To what extent these changes in attitudes translate into parenting practices is unknown at this time. Second, some of the changes in scores for this sample reflect more negative (less desirable) answers at time one for those fathers who participated at a distance than those who were in face-to-face classes. As described above, there were no significant differences between the two groups at time two on any of the sub-scales. It is not known if their scores were more negative because of individual or environmental reasons. Third, because there is no comparison group, it is not possible to determine whether extraneous influences independent from participation in the group could be responsible for the changes in scores.

*Future of the Program, and Recommendations to Clinicians.* Following the recommendations of earlier participants, the program has expanded to longer classes spread out over a longer period of time. The prison program has added three hours of instruction by expanding from four to five weeks. For the past four years, the Florida Department of Corrections has provided opportunities for the seminar to be presented to groups of inmates totaling three hundred fathers each year. In the

corrections community, it has been determined that hosting the programs in the prison chapels provides a good environment. It seems that the inmates are more relaxed in the chapel setting, the setting is one with fewer distractions and interruptions, and the chaplains are able to provide follow-up services to the fathers and their families while incarcerated. In the community program, follow-up sessions have been added beyond the instructional eighteen hours. These sessions utilize materials from the National Fatherhood Project for continuing meetings and discussion groups for an additional six-weeks to one-year.

The next step for the DADS Family Project will be to spread the program by training other facilitators to lead the project in new geographic areas. An initiative is underway at this time to train community-based providers who work with young fathers, such as family life educators in Cooperative Extension, to use this program to strengthen the co-parenting efforts of young parents. The DADS program integrates psychoeducation and mutual aid by providing education on parenting skills to the dads in a peer supportive and interactive context. This combination, offering information about effective parenting and promoting mutual aid, maximizes dads' abilities to grow and recognize their strengths and aspirations as parents. An effort is underway to revise the manual that the DADS Family Project utilizes. Feedback indicates that the participant manual needs to be less academically oriented and changed to include a digital format in addition to the hard copy book, and designed in more of a workbook format.

A model is being developed to support the replication of the program at a national level utilizing trained and licensed facilitators. The model will include onsite training, the DADS Family Project Trainer's Manual, assistance in grant development and finding funding sources, research guidance, and class materials for father participants. There are four phases of this program—the Planning Phase, the Training Phase, the Implementation Phase, and the Follow-Up Phase.

In conclusion, fatherhood education programs are needed and are effective tools for increasing child welfare and family preservation. Programs should be exciting and dynamic, include training and supervision, partner with multiple community programs, and provide for long-term community follow-up. We believe that the DADS program provides social workers with a positive strengths-based approach to working with fathers from diverse backgrounds. Since the focus is on helping fathers to develop their own "voice" about being a parent, rather than teaching fathers about some external model about parenthood, we have found this approach to be especially respectful of fathers from

various backgrounds who want to build a clearer sense of how they want to parent their children, rather than following a legacy of how their fathers may have parented or were themselves parented.

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