

**Title:** Fathers Engagement Project; Site Visit Report

**Grantee:** Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration, Division of Children and Family Services (Region IV); University of Washington School of Social Work; Divine Alternatives for Dads; and Catalyst for Kids

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## SUMMARY

The Fathers Engagement Project in King County, WA, is one of four projects funded in 2008 by the National Quality Improvement Center for Non-Residential Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC NRF). The State's Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is using the grant to locate and recruit nonresident fathers of children in the child welfare system for a peer support group and other services. The goal is to increase fathers' involvement with their children and the child welfare system.

Using the same core curriculum, which was funded by the QIC NRF, as other projects, the King County peer groups focus on topics such as how the child welfare system works, parenting education, accessing resources, and how the court system works. Within the peer group framework, the fathers learn to support each other as they navigate the child welfare system and reconnect with their children.

Another component of the Fathers Engagement Project is educating DCFS workers about identifying and locating fathers and engaging them in their children's case planning and, in some cases, including them as permanency resources. Staff from the QIC NRF and its contractors have provided trainings to DCFS staff about the importance of involving nonresident fathers and ways to do so through two full-day trainings. As part of ongoing education, the local project has hosted "Lunch with Dads" sessions at agency offices to give some of the fathers who have graduated from the program an opportunity to talk about their experiences in an informal setting with workers. Implementing the "Lunch with Dads" sessions has helped workers better understand the fathers' perspectives on their situations and the child welfare system. It also allows the fathers to feel heard by the system. One social worker noted that these sessions have been successful at increasing social worker buy-in.

Although the project still is undergoing its evaluation, anecdotal evidence points to a number of successful components, for example:

- As part of their practicum experience, graduate students from the Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program at the University of Washington have learned more about engaging nonresident fathers and contacted them on behalf of their assigned social worker using the IRB-approved script.
- The group facilitator is a man who has experiences similar to those of the fathers, and this has given him great credibility with the groups.
- The project has support from the county's judicial leadership.
- The project began providing prepaid cell phones to the fathers in the third cohort to help with communication and tracking, and all fathers who received a phone continued to attend their peer group sessions.

The peer groups have empowered the fathers, helped them feel supported by a segment within the child welfare system, and have helped them feel less isolated. The project has also helped

social workers develop a better understanding of the fathers' experiences and the importance of actively engaging them in their children's lives. Most importantly, based on feedback from interviews, it appears that the children have more involvement with their fathers and paternal relatives, as well as more permanency options.

Reprinted from *Children's Bureau Express*, "Site Visit: Fathers Engagement Project" (<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov>).

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The National Quality Improvement Center for Non-Residential Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC NRF) awarded one of its four subgrants to the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) of the Children's Administration, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/general/index.asp>) to conduct the Fathers Engagement Project in King County (Region IV). Other project partners include the University of Washington School of Social Work (<http://depts.washington.edu/sswweb/>), Divine Alternatives for Dads (D.A.D.S.) (<http://www.aboutdads.org>), the Washington State Division of Child Support (<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/>), the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman (<http://www.governor.wa.gov/ofco/>), and Catalyst for Kids (<http://catalystforkids.org>). The Fathers Engagement Project has a similar model as the other three subgrants: locating and recruiting nonresident fathers to participate in a 20-week peer support group designed to strengthen the fathers' engagement with their children who are involved with the child welfare system.

(Note: The term "father" in this report will be used interchangeably with "nonresident father" unless otherwise clarified.)

### ***Locating and Contacting Nonresident Fathers***

The process for determining if a father may be eligible for the support group occurs upon the child's removal from the home. A DCFS Child Health and Education Track (CHET) worker provides a referral to the project upon the child being placed in out-of-home care. The project's initial male contact then checks with the social worker to determine if the father is not living in the home and meets other eligibility requirements (e.g., is not the suspected perpetrator of the maltreatment). If the father is potentially eligible, the social worker or his/her graduate student will contact him using information available in the case file or otherwise provided by the father. If direct contact information is not available, the social worker or CHET worker may use leads from the case file to track down the father. This may include using databases from other agencies, such as the county's child support enforcement office, to find a match or other leads. Additionally, DCFS has a relative search unit that begins reaching out to all known relatives of children within 72 hours of their removal. The unit staff contacts the project if information is gathered about a father so that the social worker or graduate student can contact him. Upon contact with the father, the social worker or his/her graduate student will, using the approved script, determine if the father is interested in the program. If the father expresses an interest in the project and in meeting with the project's initial male contact, the social worker or graduate student will pass along the father's information to the contact, who will set up an in-person meeting.

The in-person meeting between the father and the initial male contact ideally would occur within 24 hours. At this meeting, the project staffer provides additional information about the project,

including an explanation of how it is part of a research study, what the implications of participating are, and that it is voluntary. If the father signs the consent form, the project staffer lets him know that the group facilitator will contact him in the following 3 to 4 days to let him know the schedule for the group. In addition, the initial contact tries to complete the initial interview form at this meeting or schedules another meeting to complete it.

### **Support Groups**

All QIC NRF subgrants were provided the same curriculum for a 20-week, peer-led support group. The curriculum was developed by the QIC NRF with external review and input, including from the subgrants. The curriculum outlines 12 of the 20 sessions. The following are the titles of those 12 sessions:

- Introduction
- Dad as Part of the Solution: Overview of the Child Welfare System
- Dad as Planner: Service Planning in the Child Welfare System
- Dad as a Healthy Parent: Taking Care of You
- Dad as Community Member: Identifying and Accessing Resources
- Dad as Cultural Guide: The Role of Culture in Parenting
- Dad as Parent: Understanding Your Children
- Dad as Part of Children's Placement: Visiting With Your Children
- Dad as Part of the Juvenile Court Process: Legal Advocacy and Court Etiquette
- Dad as Provider: Supporting Your Children
- Dad as Team Player: Shared Parenting
- Dad as Worker: Workforce Readiness

The first session is focused on relationship building, and then the project follows the 12 QIC NRF sessions. The last seven sessions are based on the needs of the particular class as determined by the facilitator and the participants. The sessions are led by a facilitator from D.A.D.S. Several sessions, such as those on the child welfare system, child support, and the juvenile court process, are led or attended by guest speakers. To assist the fathers in attending the sessions, the project provides them with bus tickets or gas cards and a meal. As of June 2010, three cohorts of fathers had participated in the support groups, with a fourth about to begin.

### **SITE VISIT HIGHLIGHTS**

The site visit took place on June 8–9, 2010. The following is an overview of the meetings that occurred:

#### **Day 1**

- The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) King West Office: Overview of the project and the partners (John Allen, Regional Placement Supervisor, DCFS; LaRon Burris, Group Facilitator, Divine Alternatives for Dads (D.A.D.S.); Natasha Grossman, Project Director, University of Washington School of Social Work; Carol Harper, Project Evaluator, University of Washington School of Social Work; Jonah Idczak, Social Worker, DCFS; Margaret Spearmon, Associate Dean, University of Washington School of Social Work; and Stephen Vanderhoef, Child Welfare Training and Advancement Program graduate student, University of Washington School of Social Work).
- DCFS Martin Luther King, Jr. Office:

- Meeting with six DCFS social workers who have had clients participate in the support groups. (Additional information about this meeting can be found later in this section.)
- Attended a “Lunch With Dads” session. These are held in various DCFS offices to allow the men to discuss their experiences as nonresident fathers, including the support groups, with the social workers. At this session, five fathers spoke to approximately 40 DCFS and project staff. (Additional information about the Lunch with Dads session can be found later in this section.)
- Met with four of the fathers who spoke at the “Lunch with Dads” session to discuss their experiences with the project. (Additional information about this meeting can be found later in this section.)
- Met with project and DCFS leadership [Denise Revels Robinson, Assistant Secretary, Children’s Administration, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS); Joel Odimba, Regional Administrator, Children’s Administration, DSHS; Ms. Grossman, Ms. Harper, Ms. Spearmon, and Anjolie Ganti, University of Washington School of Social Work.

## Day 2

- D.A.D.S. office: Met with project staff and partner organizations (Patrick Dowd, Ombudsman, Washington State Office of the Family and Children’s Ombudsman; Janice Holt, Program Specialist, Region 10 Office, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Nancy Roberts-Brown, Director, Catalyst for Kids; Douglas Wint, Support Enforcement Officer II, Division of Child Support, Children’s Administration, DSHS; Mr. Burris; Ms. Grossman; Ms. Harper; and Mr. Idczak)

The following provides additional detail about three of the aforementioned meetings:

- DCFS social workers made the following observations about the project and their experiences working with nonresident fathers:
  - The social workers were very pleased with what the project has been able to accomplish. The project has helped the fathers become more involved in the case, which has provided the social workers with another helpful option.
  - The fathers liked how the project staff showed them respect as the children’s fathers from the very beginning.
  - The support groups have empowered the fathers and provided them with additional knowledge about the child welfare system. They also have helped the fathers lessen their anger, gain more understanding of the situation, and feel less isolated.
  - The fathers may be angry with the child welfare system, but now they have another part of the system through which they can feel supported. Also, anger can indicate that the fathers are invested in their children’s outcomes. They may just need to learn how to focus that anger constructively.
  - The project has helped the social workers gain a more positive perspective of nonresident fathers.
  - Fathers raising their children often do not have access to the same services as the mothers.
  - The project’s trainings about the importance of nonresident fathers and how to engage them have helped the social workers, but they still find themselves occasionally applying a different standard to the fathers than would be applied to the mother with all else being equal (i.e., having different sets of expectations for the father and the mother that are only based on the father’s nonresident status).

- The following occurred during the “Lunch with Dads” session:
  - The fathers expressed their appreciation of the project, especially for Mr. Burris, the group facilitator. One father mentioned that Mr. Burris’ similar experiences to theirs allowed him to say things to the fathers that would not be acceptable coming from someone else. Another father said, “I don’t think there’s anybody that could do it better than LaRon.” Another said that without the project he would have given up trying to be involved in his child’s child welfare case. A couple fathers attributed the positive outcomes in their cases to the project.
  - A common theme in the stories was the fathers having difficulty finding services to address their personal issues (e.g., substance abuse, mental health problems).
  - The fathers were frustrated with the perceived sexism within the child welfare system. They felt that the child welfare system provided more leniency to the mothers in dealing with their personal issues.
  - When asked by a social worker what advice the fathers would give to them, one father stated that while it was good for the social worker to read about him in the case file, it also was also important for the social worker to meet him in person to get a more accurate story and see who he is as a person. He wants to be contacted by the social worker.
  - One father noted that trying to accomplish all the things required of him in the case plan makes it hard to keep a job.
  - Another father mentioned that much of the solution for them is redirecting and managing their anger and turning it into something positive.
  - When asked by the fathers what were the most difficult aspects of working with nonresident fathers, one social worker stated that it is challenging to find resources for them, locate them, and deal with their emotional (not physical) aggression.
  - The author noted that the DCFS staff seemed very engaged by the fathers’ stories. After the session concluded, several of the staff approached the fathers to talk more.
- The fathers noted the following during the meeting that occurred after the “Lunch with Dads” session:
  - The fathers described various benefits to being part of the project, including the following:
    - It has helped them navigate the child welfare system.
    - They gained resources that fathers outside the group might not know about or have.
    - The group helped them realize that they needed to take more responsibility for their situations.
    - They got to learn from and support each other. They could discuss their experiences and learn about what to expect in the process, what aspects of the process may frustrate them, and how to move forward.
  - Two reasons the fathers joined the support group were that it might assist them with their frustration and that it provided a way to help them obtain custody of their children.
  - The fathers appreciated how the group facilitator did not judge them or just tell them what to do. He helped guide and support them and was an advocate for them in the child welfare system. He “went to bat” for them.
  - The author noted that during this meeting, the fathers continued to support each other and provide advice about how to navigate the system. He later learned that this group of fathers was not even in the same cohort.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

### **Lessons Learned**

#### ***General project***

- The project staff are surprised at how engaged the audiences have been during panels at which the fathers have spoken.
- Projects and agencies should improve their relationships with community-based substance abuse treatment providers so they can establish additional referral sources for nonresident fathers.
- An initiative such as this requires a lot of focus on systems change in order to increase father engagement; it goes well beyond the support groups.
- By leading a session on child support, Division of Child Support staff have been able to learn about nonresident fathers' perspectives, which helps them relate better to their clients, and it also gives the fathers a more positive outlook on child support.
- The project has helped give policymakers more opportunities to listen to the fathers' stories. For example, fathers from the support groups have been involved with the local Child and Family Services Review Steering Committee.
- The project has helped bring about additional collaboration in the community. This has assisted the organizations and agencies in working together more effectively, knowing more about each other's roles, and being better able to complement each other's services. Examples of this collaboration include Casey Family Services asking project staff to speak about fatherhood issues at a conference and the Division of Child Support asking project staff to attend a transition fair for fathers exiting prison.

#### ***Location/engagement***

- During the initial contact and in-person meeting, the fathers are suspicious and quiet at first, but they also want to tell their stories. Sometimes just talking about their situation with someone is therapeutic for them.
- The fathers like the idea of being part of a research project.

#### ***Nonresident Fathers***

- When the fathers begin attending the support group, they often have personal issues with which they are dealing (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, anger). The project team did not initially realize how widespread mental health issues would be for the fathers, and many of the fathers did not realize they needed mental health assistance. When the group facilitator told the fathers that a mental health provider would be attending a session, the fathers were resistant. That session, however, ended up taking longer than usual because of the fathers' interest, and many of them realized that they may need counseling for various issues.
- The group facilitator's job is to help the men become the fathers they always wanted to be but did not have the resources to do so. He helps the men develop their own criteria for becoming a better father and challenges them to take responsibility for making the necessary changes.
- Participating in the project can add more complication to the fathers' lives because they become more involved with their cases (e.g., assessments, meetings, attending to case plan requirements). The project needs to provide support to ease them through the process.

- The men might not be bad fathers, but they may be bad at relationships. Many of the men had poor relationships with their fathers. Assisting them with relationship building may be the most important issue the project addresses.
- Many of the fathers are already engaged or already want to be engaged with their children. Their relationships with the mother have usually already ended, but they still worry about their children.
- The fathers need positive role models to counteract some of the current negative role models in their lives. One of the unintended consequences of the project has been turning some of the fathers into community leaders and role models.

## **Recommendations**

### ***General project***

- The project should obtain buy-in from agency and organizational leadership early in the initiative.
- In addition to child welfare and child support agencies, court personnel (e.g., judges, public defenders, court appointed special advocates), mental health providers, substance abuse treatment providers, and domestic violence organizations should be involved.
- Someone who is already part the child welfare system should be included in order to have better access to the social workers and the data.
- Project staff need to know how to advocate for the fathers without “crossing the line” with the social workers; they should know how to navigate the child welfare system and be familiar with the roles of child welfare workers.
- Support groups should be made available to resident fathers, too. (This recommendation is from social workers and fathers.)
- Ongoing trainings for child welfare agency staff about father engagement should be conducted. Project staff need to help social workers understand that granting custody to a nonresident father may still be considered reunification.
- Project partners should determine the father-friendliness of their own organizations.
- Have project partners develop an agreement about roles and responsibilities.
- The project should ensure that there are policies and practices in place to involve nonresident fathers earlier in the child welfare process. Nonresident fathers often are not contacted until the dependency hearing, but it may be helpful if they were contacted during the investigation, even if there was not an imminent removal.
- It should not be assumed that child welfare agency staff have bought into the idea of father engagement. Projects should work on changing the culture and values of the agency first and then proceed to teaching practical skills on location and engagement.

### ***Location/engagement***

- A representative should be available at the courthouse to speak with nonresident fathers and social workers about the program. (This recommendation is from the social workers.)
- Staff should partner with people and organizations that are already working with and have established relationships with fathers in the community.
- Social workers should be trained about methods for finding nonresident fathers and building relationships with them.

### ***Groups***

- Current support group participants should be introduced to fathers who have completed the program. This may help instill faith and hope in the current group by showing them an example of someone who went through the same process they are about to undertake. (This recommendation is from the fathers.)
- Sessions about parenting skills, stress management, and how to find resources should be included. (This recommendation is from the fathers.)

### **Challenges**

- Some fathers who had originally consented to participate in the support groups ended up not attending due to scheduling conflicts.
- FamLink, Washington State's Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System, has fields for the father's information, but this information often is not entered.
- It is difficult to find resources to meet the fathers' basic needs, whereas resources for mothers tend to be more readily available. Fathers need their basic needs met to be able to attend the sessions and successfully participate. There are few free resources available to males for substance abuse or mental health issues.
- It is difficult to assist the fathers before and after the support group cohorts. This type of support was not included in the project, so there are not any current mechanisms or staff available to serve them outside of the 20-week support group. Providing support to the fathers before their cohort starts might help decrease cohort attrition prior to the group's start. If there is a large gap (e.g., 3 or 4 weeks) between the initial contact and the start of the group, fathers may lose interest and not attend.
- Transportation has been a barrier to fathers attending the sessions. King County is a large area, and it could take 1 hour each way by bus to attend a session.
- Tight State and local budgets may make it difficult to fund future fatherhood work at the desired levels.
- Before awarding approval, the project's Institutional Review Board (IRB) stated that the initial male contact could not be the first person to contact a father to determine his interest in the study. The IRB decided this would be a conflict of interest because the initial male contact is considered part of the research team due to his role of seeking consent and gathering baseline information from the father. Thus, the Children's Administration decided that University of Washington School of Social Work graduate students engaged in a practicum at DCFS could support their assigned social worker to assist with location and initial contact using an IRB approved script.
- It is difficult to determine the role of county agencies or other partners when working with nonresident fathers. For example, if the nonresident father's child is investigated but not removed, does the child welfare agency have any responsibility for providing the father any services or referrals? QIC NRF guidelines state that a father is not eligible for the project unless his child has been removed.

### **Successful Strategies**

#### ***General project***

- Implementing the "Lunch With Dads" sessions has helped social workers better understand the fathers' perspectives on their situations and the child welfare system. It also allows the fathers to feel heard by the system. One social worker stated that these sessions have been successful at increasing social worker buy-in.
- The project also has tried to inform the community and other agencies about its work and the importance of engaging fathers. Project staff and some participating fathers have spoken to the community through panels similar to the "Lunch With Dads"

sessions, including at local conferences and at the Attorney General's office. The group facilitator has met with various professionals in the community, such as judges and agency commissioners, to promote the project and father engagement.

- The Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has held multiple staff meetings about the project to stress that engaging fathers can be a key factor for cases. These meetings, in conjunction with other agency and project efforts, have helped change the discourse within the agency about the importance of fathers in cases and in the children's lives.
- The social work graduate student who assists with initial contact activities has spread the word about the project and the importance of father engagement with his classmates.
- Project staff let the social workers know this approach might support other case outcomes (e.g., bringing paternal relatives into the picture) and that they are not trying to take work away from them or insinuating that they are doing a poor job. The project staff just want to team with them to serve their clients better.
- Support from the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the relationships developed between the project and DSHS and its agencies have greatly helped the project, in part because DSHS provides its employees time to work on the project. Additionally, project staff, and even participating fathers, have been able to attend leadership meetings.
- The evaluation of the project is not an external activity. The project manager and the evaluator constantly communicate with each other. This helps keep the evaluation findings and needs at the forefront and allows the project to adjust its activities based on the outcomes.
- A key factor in the project's success is that the county's judicial leadership has supported the project. The bench cards used by the judges in King County's model court include several questions about nonresident fathers, including their level of engagement with the children and the services they are receiving.

### ***Location/engagement***

- The group facilitator is persistent in contacting the fathers after they consent to participate. If he does not reach them at first, he calls them at different times, even late at night, because they may have nontraditional schedules. When he does reach them, he tries to get the fathers to focus on their children's outcomes rather than who is to blame, which is often the fathers' initial focus in the conversation.
- During the process of locating the fathers, graduate students may input paternal relative information into FamLink, which can help with the progress of the case, including the family team decision making meetings.
- It has been vital to the project to have a DCFS social worker or their graduate student representative dedicated to locating and contacting the fathers. The social workers are often too busy to do the outreach. One social worker stated that, due to high caseloads, she does not have the 20 minutes necessary to listen to a father tell his story. One graduate student took great interest in the effort and was hired as a full-time DCFS employee to continue supporting assigned social workers in the location and contact of the fathers.
- In an effort to engage the fathers prior to the first official support group session, the group facilitator conducted an introductory session before the cohort officially began. The project provided a meal to the fathers and used the meeting to help determine the needs of that particular group of fathers.

- For the third cohort, the Fathers Engagement Project began providing prepaid cell phones to the fathers to help with communication and tracking. Each cell phone has 1,000 minutes and is provided to them during the second session to ensure that they are committed to attending the support group. The fathers are instructed that the phones are to be used to contact project staff, individuals affiliated with their child's case (e.g., social worker, service provider), and their children, as well as for emergencies. This has been very helpful in keeping up with the fathers and maintaining their attendance. Prior to providing the cell phones, fathers dropped out of the program more frequently. In this cohort, all fathers who received a cell phone continued to attend. The cell phone also has provided the project staff with another way of contacting the fathers for the evaluation surveys.
- The interviewed social workers noted the following successful strategies:
  - Because many of the people that a father may come into contact with in the child welfare process are female (e.g., social workers, judges), it has been very helpful for the project's initial contact to be a male, with whom the fathers may be more comfortable sharing their experiences and concerns.
  - The fathers have liked that the project is part of DCFS and that they are being supported from within the agency.
- The fathers appreciated that the project approached them and accepted them with open arms. The project staff let them release their frustrations, helped them navigate the system, explained what was expected of them by their social workers, and let them know that the staff would be there for them. (This strategy is from the fathers.)
- Project staff listed the following as important characteristics of staff involved in the initial contact and in-person meetings: being nonthreatening, showing they are not in a rush and have time to listen, not carrying a child welfare caseload, valuing the importance of fathers, understanding how a male processes information, and being committed to cultural competency.
- Within 72 hours of an out-of-home placement, DCFS holds a family team decision making meeting. These meetings give project staff an opportunity to tell the social worker about the project and gather any information about the fathers, including their contact information or any leads on identifying them.

### **Groups**

- Having a strong, effective facilitator is one of the main drivers of this process. The group facilitator for this project has been in a situation similar to the fathers in the support groups, which has helped him relate to and communicate with them.
- The fathers noted the following successful strategies:
  - One father stated that it was helpful to him that the group facilitator stressed that the fathers should get past their anger and take responsibility for the situation.
  - The fathers felt that the group aspect was important to the success of the project. It was helpful to them to hear about other fathers' experiences and build a relationship with them.
  - The sessions were held during traditional after-work hours, which made it easier for the fathers to attend, thereby increasing attendance. Other nonproject services offered to the fathers often were available only during traditional work hours.
  - Providing a meal to the fathers at the sessions was appreciated and may have increased attendance.
- Project staff listed the following as being important characteristics of the group facilitator: passion for father engagement, effective teacher, fearless, veteran father, cares about

children, connected to the community, has experience with the child welfare system and understands how it operates, firm, direct, good listener, open to learning, able to walk in both worlds (as a nonresident father and in the child welfare agency), reflective, respected, genuine, has access to key leadership, and experienced working with fathers.

- Having a lawyer present at one of the sessions allowed the fathers to see the profession in a more positive light and also helped them learn more about their rights.

## **OUTCOMES**

### ***Design***

The evaluation for the four subgrants originally was to follow an experimental design with four to five fathers being randomly assigned to each cohort of the treatment and control groups. This requirement was eliminated, however, after all of the subgrants had difficulty recruiting enough fathers to assign to the treatment and control groups. In June 2009, the National Quality Improvement Center for Non-Resident Fathers and the Child Welfare System (QIC NRF) allowed the subgrants to assign all eligible fathers to the treatment group.

The original evaluation design also required that contact must be made with the fathers within 45 days of their children's removal in order for them to participate in the study. This requirement also was eliminated after the subgrants alerted the QIC NRF to the difficulties in gathering contact information and then contacting the fathers. In some cases, the subgrant received the contact information after the 45-day period and was not able to contact the father. The 45-day requirement did not include many fathers who appeared to be otherwise eligible to participate. In June 2009, the QIC NRF removed the contact period completely and even allowed the subgrants to contact fathers who had previously been deemed ineligible due to the 45-day contact requirement.

At the meeting during which a father consents to participating in the study, the project staffer will conduct a 25 to 30 minute baseline interview with him. The subgrant then conducts follow-up interviews at Weeks 8 and between Weeks 16-20. The interviews cover the father's employment, education, health, transportation, prior contact with CPS (as a parent and as a child), child support obligations, and relationship with the mother, as well as the number and ages of his children and their likes and dislikes. The fathers receive a \$25 gift certificate upon completion of the third interview. The fathers also complete a Program Satisfaction Survey at Weeks 8 and 16 and a Family Support Program Outcome Survey at Week 20. Additionally, the group facilitator completes an online survey about attendance and feedback at the end of each support group meeting.

### ***Findings***

- Between December 12, 2008, and February 12, 2010, 651 families in King County had at least one child removed from the home due to child maltreatment allegations. 945 children in these families were placed in out-of-home care. Nearly 75 percent (481) of these families had a nonresident father.
- As of May 31, 2010, 20 of the 481 nonresident fathers (4 percent) had enrolled in the project, and 11 (2 percent) refused to participate after being approached by the project.
- The following are some of the reasons fathers did not participate in the project (percents based on the 481 total nonresident fathers):

- Live outside of Washington State and/or Region IV: 107 (22 percent)
- Still being identified or located by the project: 94 (19 percent)
- Incarcerated: 51 (11 percent)
- Potential safety concern: 34 (7 percent)
- Father-specific characteristics (e.g., several mental health issue, non-English speaker): 27 (6 percent)
- Deceased: 17 (4 percent)
- Domestic violence concern: 17 (4 percent)
- Child was in out-of-home care prior to study start date: 17 (4 percent)
- Mother unsure of who father is: 15 (3 percent)
- No available information: 14 (3 percent)
- Termination of parental rights already occurred: 10 (2 percent)
- Between February 12, 2010 and May 31, 2010, there were another 141 nonresident fathers who had at least one child enter out-of-home care. Of these nonresident fathers, 39 (27 percent) were potentially eligible for the project. As of May 31, 2010, four of them have already enrolled in the project.