

DADS MATTER PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2009-2010

Preliminary Results for Confidence and Knowledge

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Abstract

This report contains the results of performance measures used by Dads Matter for the 2009-2010 academic year. Performance measures used during this period include a) a measure of client confidence in parenting skills and b) a measure of content-based knowledge from Dad2Dad training sessions. Evaluation results are generally positive, with both confidence in parenting abilities and knowledge related to parenting increasing from pre- to post-test. Recommendations for future developments are discussed in detail.

Introduction

Dads Matter of Fayette County (Pennsylvania) is a fatherhood initiative through the Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/Fayette, Inc. (PIC). The mission of the organization is to enable fathers to improve their relationships with their children, improve parenting skills/practices, and help fathers to overcome barriers that prevent them from being effective parents. Since its inception, Dads Matter has engaged in a number of activities to fulfill its mission, including conducting parenting sessions, conducting events promoting father-child interaction, hosting special events, developing and distributing a regular newsletter.

To document the progress of Dads Matter, data are collected regularly, in the form of intake forms, a measure of confidence in parenting, and a measure of knowledge of session content for Dad2Dad. This report is part of the evaluation necessary to gauge the progress of Dads Matter.

Overview

The purpose of this report is two-fold. First, results of data analysis conducted on confidence measures will be discussed. In addition, results of data analysis conducted on knowledge in content areas targeted in Dad2Dad sessions will be addressed.

Method

Confidence measures were completed by Dads Matter clients at the beginning of the Dad2Dad course¹, and at the end of the course. Knowledge measures were completed by clients at the beginning and end of each of the six Dad2Dad sessions. Prior to analysis, a comprehensive coding guide for each evaluation was developed; data were coded, entered, cleaned and checked. Wherever a respondent chose not to respond to an item, the item was coded as “missing” and subsequent analyses were conducted omitting that respondent for that item alone. Thirty-two Dads Matter

¹ The Dad2Dad course included the National Fatherhood Initiative's curriculum 24/7 Dad™. Dads Matter combined 11 of the 12 24/7 Dad™ sessions into 6 sessions, Session #5: Spirituality was not included.

clients completed the confidence pre-test, while 30 clients completed the confidence post-test. Knowledge measures were completed on twelve occasions (6 “pre” and 6 “post”). Across those twelve assessments, as many as 32 Dads Matter clients and as few as 25 clients completed the knowledge measure.

Confidence in Parenting Skills

Confidence in various aspects of parenting was assessed before and after completing Dad2Dad using a 14-item assessment tool. Dads Matter clients were asked to rate how confident they are in each of 14 aspects of parenting using a 100-point scale, with responses ranging from 0 = cannot do it at all to 100 = highly certain can do.

Mean confidence scores ranged from a high of 86.46 to a low of 68.67. The scale mean (across all 14 items) before participating in Dad2Dad was 1090.83 (out of a possible 1400). The scale mean after participating in Dad2Dad was 1161.43, with a mean scale difference of 70.58, indicating that clients were more confident of their parenting skills following completion of Dad2Dad (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Confidence Scale: Pre and Post Means and Mean Scale Scores

	Confidence Measure	Mean-Pre	Mean-Post	Mean-Diff
1	Get your child to see school as important	81	84.79	3.79
2	Help your child get good grades at school	84	82.08	-1.92
3	Get your child to enjoy school	74.83	77.92	3.08
4	Show you children that working hard at school influences later success	84.5	85.42	0.92
5	Get your children into activities that provide them with positive social experiences	76.5	84.79	8.29
6	Get your child to keep physically fit	77.5	81.67	4.17
7	Find time for leisure activities with your children	81.5	83.08	1.58
8	Help your children make good choices making friends	77.83	82.08	4.25
9	Get your children to do things you want at home	73	80.42	7.42
10	Instill your values in your children	78.33	86.46	8.13
11	Prevent your children from doing things you do not want them to do outside the home	73.67	81.88	8.21
12	Help your child bounce back after they tried their best and failed	78.67	82.71	4.04
13	Get yourself to keep trying when things are going really badly	80.83	84.17	3.33
14	Get rid of self-doubts after you have had tough setbacks	68.67	83.96	15.29
	Scale Scores	1090.83	1161.43	70.58

An examination of individual scale items is useful to understanding particular strengths. For example, it is worth noting that the largest pre-post difference was on item 14 (“Get rid of self-doubts after you have had tough setbacks”) where mean scores increased from 68.67 (pre-Dad2Dad) to 83.96 (post-Dad2Dad), yielding a mean difference score of 15.29 points. In other words, clients were significantly more confident of their abilities to overcome self-doubt after tough setbacks following completion of the course. This is particularly noteworthy as the population served by Dads Matter consists largely of persons who are plagued by self-doubt.

Items 5 (“get your child into activities that provide them with positive social experiences”), 9 (“get your child to do things you want at home”), 10 (“instill values in your children”), and 11 (“prevent your children from doing things you do not want them to do outside the home”) showed similar levels of improvement in confidence, with mean difference scores ranging from a low of 7.42 (item 9) to a high of 8.29 (item 5). For each of these items, pre-test mean scores were in the 70s while post-test mean scores were in the 80s — again, a significant increase in confidence in each of these areas.

Mean difference scores for items 1 (“get your child to see school as important”), 3 (“get your child to enjoy school”), 6 (“get your child to keep physically fit”), 8 (“help your child to make good choices making friends”), 12 (“help your child bounce back after they tried their best and failed”) and 13 (“get yourself to keep trying when things are going really badly”) also showed similar levels of improvement in confidence, with mean difference scores ranging from 3.08 (item 3) to 4.25 (item 8).

Overall, the increases in confidence reported by Dad2Dad participants are very encouraging and help to quantify the effectiveness of the program. Participation in Dad2Dad has significantly impacted clients’ confidence in their abilities as a parent across a number of content areas. There are only two items where mean differences for were so small as to be non-significant, with a mean difference score for item 7 (“find time for leisure activities with your children”) at 1.58, and a mean difference score for item 4 (“show your children that working hard at school influences later success”). Only one scale item showed a decrease in confidence pre- to post-test: item 2 – “help your child to get good grades at school”, with a mean difference score of -1.92. Although this difference is among the smallest differences reported, it is worth considering how Dad2Dad content related to this item might be revised in order to increase confidence in this realm.

Parenting Knowledge

Knowledge related to various aspects of parenting and parenting skills were assessed both before and after completing each Dad2Dad session using assessment tools developed for this purpose. Items on each knowledge assessment tool asked Dads Matter clients to rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with a series of statements. Ratings were made using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree. Each knowledge assessment tool

also included one summary item asking clients to report how confident they feel in their parenting knowledge/skills in the content area address in that session. This information was reported in the form of a letter grade (A, B, C, D, or F). Higher scores indicate higher levels of agreement with statements that accurately reflect good parenting practices (i.e. higher scores are indicative of greater parenting knowledge). Results from the six knowledge measures are summarized in Table 2, below.

Table 2. Knowledge Measure: Pre and Post Means and Mean Scale Scores

Knowledge Measure	Mean-Pre	Mean-Post	Mean-D
1.1 Men who are self-aware take responsibility for their own behavior.	4.14	4.52	0.38
1.2 I can be a good father without being in touch with my feelings/moods.	3.71	4.19	0.48
1.3 As a father, my primary responsibility is to take care of my children's social and physical needs.	4	4.11	0.11
1.4 It is not important for me to respect the mother of my child.	4.33	4.54	0.21
1.5 Rites of passage prepare children for adulthood.	3.52	4.14	0.63
1.6 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel as a parent?	3.38	4	0.62
1.7 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel about teaching your children about what it means to be a man?	3.55	3.96	0.41
2.1 "Self-worth" describes how a person thinks and feels about himself.	4.16	4.45	0.3
2.2 Praise for "being" lets children know you love them, while praise for "doing" lets children know how much you appreciate them.	4.28	4.58	0.3
2.3 Boys need to learn to keep their feelings to themselves.	4.22	4.52	0.3
2.4 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel as a parent in helping your child(ren) develop a sense of self-worth?	3.97	4	0.03
3.1 Hitting a punching bag is a good way to express anger.	2.59	3.88	1.29
3.2 A person who is physically fit is better equipped to manage stressful situations.	2.97	4.04	1.08
3.3 Mothers are more important when it comes to raising children in the early years.	2.88	3.15	0.27
3.4 Men who are married generally live fuller, happier lives than men who are not married.	3.11	3.96	0.85
3.5 Children naturally develop problem solving skills.	3.41	3.61	0.2
3.6 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel as a parent in teaching your child how to manage their emotions.	3.59	3.88	0.28
4.1 Morals are beliefs we have about what actions are right and wrong.	4.4	4.68	0.18
4.2 "Values" are beliefs we have about what actions are right and wrong.	4.12	4.5	0.38
4.3 A child's primary source for their values comes from their parents.	4.28	4.42	0.14
4.4 Children should not participate in making family rules.	3.84	3.88	0.04
4.5 Discipline means "to teach."	4.12	4.62	0.5
4.6 In setting family rules, a list of "do's" and "don'ts" is useful.	4.08	4.44	0.36
4.7 I'm the parent – I'm allowed to break family rules.	4.44	4.42	0.02
4.8 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel as a parent in teaching your child(ren) about values.	4	4.12	0.12
5.1 Children do best when their fathers set reasonable goals for them.	4.36	4.4	0.04
5.2 A child's sense of self-worth is present at birth.	3.6	3.4	0.2
5.3 Fathers should keep their expectations for their children reasonable.	4.12	4.52	0.4
5.4 A man who is offered overtime work should always take it.	3.56	4	0.44
5.5 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel as a parent in helping my child(ren) set goals they can accomplish.	4.04	3.96	-0.08
6.1 As a father, it is always important for me to be involved when my child is choosing friends.	4.2	4.42	0.22
6.2 Please circle the letter grade that best represents how confident you feel as a parent in communicating with your children.	4.12	4.24	0.12
Total	123.09	133.55	10.82

Parenting knowledge showed a significant increase following completion of Dad2Dad, with a mean scale knowledge score of 123.09 on the pre-test, and a mean scale knowledge score of 133.55 on the post-test, a mean increase in knowledge of 10.82 points. While there was an overall increase in parenting knowledge across all six sessions, increases in knowledge by individual sessions was modest.

An examination of scores by session shows the greatest initial (pre-test) knowledge in Sessions 2, 4, and 6 (all with pre-test session mean scores at 4.16) which addressed issues related to self-worth, values and communication, respectively. In other words, clients are walking into Dad2Dad with reasonably accurate knowledge on the items for Sessions 2 (self-worth), 4 (values), and 6 (communication) addressed on the assessment tool.

The greatest post-test knowledge was also evident in Sessions 2, 4, and 6 (with post-test session means of 4.39, 4.39, and 4.33, respectively). Mean increases from pre- to post-test for these three sessions range from .23 (Session 3), to .22 (Session 4), and .17 (Session 6). In other words, there was a very slight increase in mean scores for sessions 2, 4, and 6, from pre- to post-test, which is not surprising given the relatively high scores prior to exposure to the Dad2Dad curriculum.

The lowest pre-test knowledge was evident in Sessions 5 (mean = 3.94), 1 (mean = 3.80) and 3 (mean = 3.09), respectively. Session 5 addressed goal setting, while Session 1 addressed parenting responsibilities, and Session 3 addressed managing emotions. Although these means increased from pre- to post-test, means for Sessions 1 (mean = 4.21), 5 (mean = 4.06), and 3 (mean = 3.75) remain the lowest. In other words, clients are walking in to Dad2Dad with less knowledge in the areas addressed in Sessions 1, 3, and 5, than they had walking in to Sessions 2, 4, and 6. Following Dad2Dad, knowledge related to parenting issues covered in Sessions 3 and 5 had increased but remained lower on average than knowledge related to the topics addressed in Sessions 2, 4, and 6. The one exception is mean scores for Session 1 (parenting responsibility), where mean scores increased to levels comparable with pre-test means on Sessions 2, 4, and 6.

Finally, it is worth noting that the lowest mean scores, overall, were obtained for Session 3 which dealt with managing emotions. Session 3 yielded the lowest pre-test mean (at 3.09) and the lowest post-test mean (at 3.75), although Session 3 also yielded the greatest mean difference (at .66). Although clients are coming to Dad2Dad with less accurate knowledge about managing emotions, as evidenced by the items keyed to Session 3 in the Knowledge Measure, and they are leaving Dad2Dad with less knowledge in this area as well, this is also the one session in which clients are showing the greatest increase in knowledge from pre- to post-test

Relatively low scores in this area are not surprising given that some long-standing attitudes and beliefs about appropriate ways to express emotion are challenged in this session. For example, Item 1 on the Session 3 portion of the Knowledge Measure addresses the extent to which clients agree that hitting a punching bag is a good way to express anger. The pre-test mean for this item is

2.59, while the post-test mean is 3.88 (with a mean difference score of 1.29). These scores reflect general ambivalence about hitting a punching bag as an emotional outlet — a worrisome result in light of concerns about domestic violence and a culture which generally glorifies violence. Given this pattern of results, it is worth examining the content presented in Session 3, for the purpose of revising the Session 3 curriculum to have a greater impact on knowledge about managing emotions.

Overall, positive changes in mean scores from pre- to post-test across the six Dad2Dad Sessions are evidence of the effectiveness of the curriculum, in general, and the Dads Matter program, in particular. While there are concerns about the somewhat lower knowledge base that remains for Session 3 material following Dad2Dad, the significant increase in knowledge related to this topic from pre- to post-test is encouraging.

Evaluation Summary

Overall, responses are quite positive, with the Dads Impact event receiving higher ratings than the Dads Matter Sessions. That the scores for Dads Impact are less than perfect is actually good. Data that are too high or too consistent would suggest that something was amiss in the data, such as respondents not taking the time to think about their responses, or simply filling in the response that Dads Matter staff members are looking for.

Taken as a whole, the generally positive tone of the open-ended responses on both evaluations supports the positive tone of responses to the scaled items. The Dads Matter team should be proud of the work they have done to date.

Looking Ahead

As the project moves ahead, a number of steps are in order. As data collection continues, additional data analyses will be conducted. There are significant benefits to working with a larger data set, particularly in terms of looking for patterns in the data. However, based on data collection to date, results are most encouraging. Dads Matter clients are finishing the Dad2Dad curriculum feeling more confident in their parenting skills, and with increased knowledge of sound parenting practices. In moving forward, given the relatively high levels of knowledge and confidence reported on pre-tests by Dad2Dad participants, the Dads Matter management team might want to consider altering the questions asked, both on the confidence measure and on the sessions measures, to better identify pre-test deficits in both confidence and knowledge. For Dads Matter sessions, it will be useful to examine responses across time, as an exercise in quality control. Finally, long-term follow-up with Dads Matter clients to measure the lasting impact of Dad2Dad on parenting practices is in order.