

More Organizations Using 24/7 Dad® with Teen Dads



Posted: 3/24/2016

By Christopher A. Brown

More organizations are using National Fatherhood Initiative's **24/7 Dad® program** with teen dads.

This fact was underscored a couple of weeks ago when I attended the Texas Fatherhood Summit in Austin, Texas. Organized by the Child and Family Research Partnership at the University of Texas (at Austin), the conference brought together researchers and practitioners to discuss the latest in evidence-based research on fatherhood programs. Several of the attendees included staff from organizations using 24/7 Dad® with teen dads, including those with home-visiting programs.

The use of the 24/7 Dad® in a home-visiting setting—which involves one-on-one work with dads complimented, in many instances, by group-based work—speaks to the flexibility of this evidence-based program. So when I ran across a **blog post** that reported on a recent study by the Urban Institute on five home visiting programs' outreach to young (e.g. teen) dads—and strategies for involving them in such programs—I decided to take a look under the hood of 24/7 Dad® for additional clues about why the program is so useful with teen dads in one-on-one and group-based settings.

The study found three major challenges in working with teen dads:

- Lack of maturity
- “Rollercoaster” relationships with moms that make it hard to gain access to dads
- Multiple commitments and responsibilities (i.e. school, work, and supporting a family)

If you work with teen dads, and even if you don't, I'm sure these challenges are no surprise to you.

The most interesting, useful component of the study is the identification of three strategies programs can use to engage teen dads.

- Help dads define fatherhood (i.e. a healthy framework for fatherhood)
- Provide relationship education (e.g. on co-parenting and communication)
- Work with dads' schedules and commitments (e.g. serve fathers outside normal business hours)

The content of 24/7 Dad® is ideal for implementing the first two strategies. The structure of the program allows for the flexibility required to implement the third strategy. Specifically:

- The first half of the A.M. and P.M. programs help teen dads explore and develop a healthy definition of masculinity (which is closely linked to fatherhood). The latter half of the programs helps them develop a healthy definition of what it means to be a father.
- The latter half of the programs helps them learn how to effectively co-parent and communicate with the mother of their child.
- The structure of the programs allows for standard group-based work that supports one-on-one visits, breaking sessions up into smaller chunks to meet the time constraints of some dads (e.g. having only 30 or 45 minutes in which to conduct a group), and pulling out portions of each session (i.e. activities) and modifying them for one-on-one work during home visits or case-management interactions.

An excellent example of how the structure of the programs allows for flexibility is the use of the 24/7 Dad® A.M. program by the **Community Action of Central Texas**, a Head Start provider located in San Marcos, TX that attended the Texas Fatherhood Summit.

As I reported in a **previous post** on my training of this organization on the program, they planned to use—and are now using—24/7 Dad® A.M. in its traditional group-based format. I also structured the training to help them modify certain portions of sessions for use during home visits with dads. Moreover, as I learned from their staff at the conference, they have since broken each session of the program into 45-minute portions for use in their work with teen dads in area high schools! They report that this format fits well with the typical length of classes in the high schools, and that the teen dads have responded very well to the content.

I'm a firm believer in the incredible ability of organizations that serve dads to discover how best to use our programs and resources. That's why all of us at NFI are committed to provide case studies and other examples of how folks like you effectively use them. Thanks for your partnership!

How does your organization use 24/7 Dad® in traditional and unique ways?

Do you use 24/7 Dad® with teen dads? If so, tell us how!