

24/7 Dad® in a Multi-site Parent Education Intervention for Non-resident Fathers: Preliminary Project Evaluation

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Abstract

Research indicates that children with involved fathers fare better than children with disengaged fathers. In response, *4 Your Child*, based in Louisville, Kentucky, provides responsible parenting, economic stability, and relationship education services to fathers at risk for disengagement in an attempt to improve the quantity and quality of their involvement with their children. In *4 Your Child*, non-resident fathers across several Kentucky counties are enrolled in a parent education intervention that features National Fatherhood Initiative's 24/7 Dad® and individualized case management services aimed at helping them increase their parenting skills and capacity to develop a co-parenting alliance with their children's mother. The results of preliminary analyses reveal statistically significant increases in parenting knowledge and conflict resolution skills for program participants. Recommendations for future research and practice are also included.

Program Description

The *4 Your Child* program, based in Louisville, Kentucky, is a responsible fatherhood intervention for non-resident fathers ages 16 and up aimed at helping them increase their capacity for taking more active roles in their children's lives. It includes 28 hours of parent education and up to 6 months of case management services. The parent education component of the program contains fatherhood, parenting, and healthy relationship training delivered via group workshops featuring content from National Fatherhood Initiative's (2015) (NFI) 24/7 Dad® A.M. curriculum. According to NFI, 24/7 Dad® A.M. is a comprehensive fatherhood curriculum covering 12 topics including showing and handling feelings, communication, examining one's masculinity, the father's role, co-parenting, discipline, the benefits of marriage, child development, and negotiating the work-family balance. The curriculum is based on the premise that being a good father is a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week responsibility and comes with facilitator's manual, videos, interactive activities, and workbooks for participants. Given that a large proportion of *4 Your Child*'s target population, non-resident fathers, are involved in high conflict co-parenting relationships with the child's mother over custody, visitation or child support, program participants also receive additional co-parenting modules featuring content from the Together We Can curriculum. These additional modules cover content related to identifying family members and their unique contributions to family functioning, understanding the importance of co-parenting and the role of kin networks, as well as the relationship between child support and parenting time and the barriers to securing them. The *4 Your Child* program's 28 hours of parent education are delivered in 7, 4-hour group-based workshops. In addition to the core curriculum content, the workshops also include stimulating videos and activities to reinforce learning for those who are more experiential in nature. These workshops are co-facilitated by male-female duos with human services related educational backgrounds and experience delivering psychoeducational material in community-based settings.

In addition to the group-based responsible fatherhood, healthy relationship and co-parenting training workshops, *4 Your Child* participants are also eligible to receive solution focused case management services for up to 6 months. These case management services are led by Parent Resource Coordinators (PRCs) who begin engaging program participants with an initial intake assessment to determine the participants' strengths and needs. This initial assessment is followed by a goal setting meeting/individualized service plans in which the PRC works collaboratively with the participants to identify their parenting goals and objectives. Subsequent to the goal setting meeting, the PRC links the participants to community-based organizations that can aid them in leveraging their strengths to accomplish their goals. For the remainder of the participants' time in the program, the PRC monitors their progress towards their goals via in-person meetings once a week for months 1-2, as well as at least one follow-up telephone call. For months 3-4, there is an in-person meeting once every other week, as well as at least one follow-up telephone call. For months 5-6, there is an in-

person meeting once per month, as well as at least one follow-up telephone call. Although PRCs are trained to tailor their services to meet the individual needs of specific fathers, all fathers participate in Strengths Finders assessments, receive copies of *The 5 Love Languages* (Chapman, 2010) and are referred to workforce development services. Each program participant is also eligible to have his child support case audited for accuracy.

Methods

Design

The data for this study were collected via a pre-post design spanning the 7 weeks of the parent education component of the *4 Your Child* fatherhood program. This design allows for the differences in fathers' performance on various programmatic outcomes prior to starting the program to be compared to those recorded at the end of the parent education component of the program.

Sample

The sample for this study includes 508 non-resident fathers participating in the *4 Your Child* fatherhood program. Inclusion criteria include being at least 16 years of age and having at least 1 non-resident child. Fathers were excluded if they reported having an open child abuse and neglect case or domestic violence restraining order. On average, the fathers were 36.8 ($SD = 8.7$) years old and received 23.8 of a possible 28 hours of curriculum content. Table 1 presents frequency distributions for the other sample demographic variables.

Table 1. Sample Frequency Distributions

Variable	Category	N	%
Race	Black	242	47.6
	White	233	45.9
	Multi-racial	21	4.1
	Asian/Pacific Islander	3	0.6
	Did not report	9	1.8
	Marital Status	Single	324
Married		63	12.4
Divorced		83	16.3
Separated		34	6.7
Widower		2	0.4
Did not report		2	0.4

— *Continued*

Table 1. Sample Frequency Distributions (Continued)

Variable	Category	N	%
Educational Attainment	Less than HS Diploma	27	5.3
	HS Diploma	350	68.9
	College Degree	98	19.3
	Graduate School	17	3.3
	Did not report	16	3.1
Employed	Yes	212	41.7
	No	291	57.3
	Did not report	5	1.0
Income	0-24,999	401	78.9
	25,000-49,999	75	14.8
	50,000 +	12	2.4
	Did not report	20	3.9

Measures

Parenting Knowledge and Skills. Parenting knowledge and skills were measured using the 24/7 Dad® Fathering Skills Survey (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2015). This survey has 22 items that are multiple choice response questions covering content emphasized in the curriculum in the areas of self-awareness, caring for self, fathering skills, parenting skills, and relationships skills. In scoring the survey, correct answers were assigned a score of 1 and incorrect answers were assigned a score of 0. The total score for each participant represents the aggregated number of correct responses.

Co-Parenting Relationship Quality. Co-parenting relationship quality was measured using the Co-parenting Questionnaire (CQ, Margolin, Gordis, & John, 2001). This measure is a 14-item self-report instrument measured on a 5-point scale examining the amount of cooperation and conflict between parents surrounding parenting. Reported Cronbach's Alphas range from .69 to .87. For the current study, the internal consistency score was .90.

Conflict Resolution Skills. Conflict resolution skills were measured using the Conflict Resolution Style Inventory (Kurdek, 1994). This scale has 12 items measured on a 5 point scale. This measure has reported Chronbach's alpha levels of .73 and .81. For the current study, the internal consistency score was .88.

Fathers' Parenting Confidence. Parenting efficacy was measured using the Parenting Ladder (Katzev, 2000). This scale has 6 items measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 = low to 6 = high. This scale has a reported Cronbach's Alpha of .84. For the current study, the internal consistency score was .90.

Data Analysis

The primary analyses for this study consisted of a series of paired sample t-tests that served to determine the differences on various programmatic outcomes from pre to post intervention. A total of 4 paired sample t-tests were conducted, one for each of the primary outcomes including parenting knowledge, parenting self-efficacy, conflict resolution skills, and co-parenting relationship quality. Follow up effect size analyses (Cohen's *d*) were conducted for each outcome yielding a statistically significant result to determine the practical significance of the differences from pre to post intervention.

Results

Paired sample t-tests were conducted for each of the outcomes included in the study.

The first t-test examined the differences in the fathers' parenting knowledge from pre to post intervention. The results revealed improvements in fathers' parenting knowledge from pre ($M = 7.76$, $SD = 2.64$) to post ($M = 10.43$, $SD = 2.91$) intervention. These differences were statistically significant $t = -15.659$ ($df = 507$, $p = .000$). These differences also yielded a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = .69$).

The second t-test examined the differences in the fathers' report of parenting self-efficacy from pre to post intervention. The results revealed improvements in fathers' parenting self-efficacy from pre ($M = 27.86$, $SD = 6.17$) to post ($M = 28.46$, $SD = 5.19$) intervention. Despite the improvements in fathers' parenting self-efficacy, these differences did not reach statistical significance $t = -1.690$ ($df = 507$, $p = .092$).

The third t-test examined the differences in the fathers' report of conflict resolution skills from pre to post intervention. The results revealed improvements in fathers' conflict resolution skills from pre ($M = 39.68$, $SD = 9.21$) to post ($M = 40.73$, $SD = 6.71$) intervention. These differences were statistically significant $t = -2.025$ ($df = 507$, $p = .043$). These differences also yielded a small effect size (Cohen's $d = .16$).

The fourth t-test examined the differences in the fathers' report of co-parenting relationship quality from pre to post intervention. The results revealed improvements in co-parenting relationship quality from pre ($M = 46.36$, $SD = 11.90$) to post ($M = 47.25$, $SD = 9.60$) intervention. Despite the improvements in co-parenting relationship quality, these differences were not statistically significant $t = -1.314$ ($df = 507$, $p = .189$). Table 2 displays the pre and post means and standard deviations, as well as the relevant t-test statistics for each of the outcome variables.

Table 2. Programmatic Outcomes Paired Sample t-tests

Variable	Category	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Parenting Knowledge	Pre	7.76	2.64	507	-15.659	.000***
	Post	10.43	2.91			
Parenting Self Efficacy	Pre	27.86	6.17	507	-1.690	.092
	Post	28.46	5.19			
Conflict Resolution	Pre	39.68	9.21	507	.2025	.043*
	Post	40.73	6.71			
Co-parenting Relationship Quality	Pre	46.36	11.90	507	-1.314	.189
	Post	47.25	9.60			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to conduct a preliminary analysis of data collected from non-resident fathers participating in the *4 Your Child* fatherhood program. Services provided include parent education workshops featuring NFI's 24/7 Dad® and solution focused case management services. Data analysis consisted of paired sample t-tests on an array of programmatic outcomes including fathers' parenting knowledge, parenting self-efficacy, conflict resolution skills, and co-parenting relationship quality. Results revealed statistically significant improvements over the 7 weeks from pre to post intervention on fathers' parenting knowledge and conflict resolution skills with moderate and small effect sizes respectively. These results provide support for the efficacy of 24/7 Dad® in increasing skills that are central to fathers' ability to take more active roles in their children's lives. In the areas of parenting self-efficacy and co-parenting relationship quality, data analysis revealed improvements from pre to post intervention that did not reach statistical significance. A plausible explanation for these results is that both parenting knowledge and conflict resolution skills are individual traits that fathers can develop independently through immersion in the program's curriculum content. However, both parenting self-efficacy, a measure of parenting confidence, and co-parenting relationship quality are concepts that necessarily require the participation of others. In the case of parenting self-efficacy, access to and engagement with one's child is vital to fathers developing more confidence in their ability to apply what they learn in the fatherhood program. As for co-parenting relationship quality, improving it requires requisite cooperation from the child's mother, a factor beyond the control of the father. It is also true that both parenting self-efficacy and co-parenting relationship quality likely require longer time periods to observe changes large enough to be detected in statistical analysis predicated on aggregated group data. Therefore, future research should include multiple data collection waves that will allow for analyses to test the extent to which changes over extended periods of time are accounted for. Moreover, agencies and practitioners interested in improving fathers' parenting self-efficacy and co-parenting relationship quality should work to recruit mothers into services. In doing so, fathers can get valuable experience working collaboratively with mothers, leading to them gaining greater access to their children. This will increase fathers' opportunities to apply what they learn in fatherhood programs, ultimately increasing their parenting confidence and most importantly, enhancing the quality of their involvement with their children.

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