



2013 Report to the Pennsylvania State Roundtable

Father Engagement Workgroup

Chairperson:

Honorable Maria Musti Cook

Court of Common Pleas of York County



May 2013

Dear Statewide Roundtable Members:

Following the 2012 State Roundtable, the Father Engagement Workgroup was charged with the following tasks: finalize a cross-system training to improve father engagement, discuss the use of congregate care as it affects father engagement and re-survey the counties to analyze whether our efforts were resulting in a positive change in the practice of engaging fathers.

The Father Engagement Workgroup met regularly from September 2012 through March 2013. This report summarizes the efforts of the Workgroup to accomplish the identified tasks and review the results of our efforts to date. The Workgroup members have been very passionate and dedicated to the cause of improving each child welfare system participant's contacts with the fathers who enter the system. The focus has been for all system participants to recognize the value of fathers in the lives of their children and promote their participation in all levels of decision-making with the ultimate goals of protecting children, promoting strong families, promoting child well-being, and providing timely permanence.

With the tremendous assistance of the Child Welfare Resource Center, a training curriculum entitled "Building and Sustaining Father Engagement" has been developed to target all participants including: judges, hearing officers, solicitors, parent attorneys, GALs, caseworkers, CASAs, JPOs, providers and community members. The Workgroup anticipates that a pilot training may occur in Summer of 2013, with a full roll-out of the training by Fall 2013.

The bench cards developed by the Workgroup in 2012 were returned from the Bench Book committee with a request to revise them to make them more concise. The Workgroup took on this task as well and revised the bench cards to the extent the Workgroup felt possible without losing valuable content.

I wish to especially acknowledge the hard work of the members of our Workgroup, especially Sharon England and Brian Davis for the tremendous work on the training curriculum. Additionally, a special acknowledgement to the fathers who traveled from Allegheny County for each meeting during the past three years and provided us with valuable insight. As always our work would not be possible without the significant contributions of the staff members of the Office of Children and Families in the Courts, particularly Stephenie Strayer who was invaluable to me.

Maria Musti Cook, Chair
Father Engagement Workgroup

Father Engagement Workgroup

Chairperson

Honorable Maria Musti Cook
Court of Common Pleas of York County

Members

Stephen Bishop

Director

Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research
Juvenile Court Judges' Commission

Bill Phifer

Community Resource Specialist

Allegheny County Children, Youth and
Families

Lisa Chambers

Court Liaison Manager

Allegheny County Children, Youth and
Families

Lynne Kallus-Rainey, MSW, LSW

Executive Director

Bucks County Children and Youth

Ann Marie Cucinotta, Esq.

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer

Berks County

Myka Piatt

Training Coordinator

Community Action Association of
Pennsylvania

Brian J. Davis, MSW, LSW

Curriculum and Instructional Specialist

PA Child Welfare Resource Center
University of Pittsburgh

Ronald Randall

Father

DADS Program of Allegheny County

Sharon England, JD, MSW, LSW

Curriculum and Trainer Development

Office Child Welfare Resource Center
University of Pittsburgh

Stephen J. Suknaic

Director

Dauphin County Juvenile Probation

CarrieAnn Frolio

Assistant Director

York County Office of Children, Youth and
Families

Jawahl Voorhees

Program Representative I

Department of Public Welfare
Office of Children and Youth

George Gilmore

Father

DADS Program of Allegheny County

Dan Worley, Esq.

Parent Attorney

York County

Denise Hoffman

Parent Ambassador

PA Child Welfare Resource Center
University of Pittsburgh

Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts
Office of Children and Families in the Courts

Stephenie Strayer
Judicial Program Analyst

Jennifer Horn, MSW
Judicial Program Analyst

Elke Moyer
Administrative Associate/Graphic Designer

Sandra Moore, MSW
Administrator

Father Engagement Training

In 2012, the Father Engagement Workgroup conceptualized a statewide training for child welfare and related professionals (legal, direct service and otherwise) on the topic of father engagement in court and child welfare direct service efforts. The concept and outline were forwarded to the Child Welfare Resource Center (CWRC) for further refinement. During the course of 2012-2013, the Workgroup became the QUAC (Quality Assurance Committee) for CWRC to further develop the curriculum. The concepts from 2012 were blended with existing training materials for father engagement and a new product emerged. The new training expands the proposed target audience of prior trainings (child welfare workers) to include a cross-system training of judges, hearing officers, parent attorneys, GALs, CASAs, JPOs, providers, and community members (teachers, parents, family center personnel, local children's roundtable members, etc...).

The revised training curriculum is entitled "Building and Sustaining Father Engagement". An outline of the training is included as Attachment A to this report. The training is scheduled to cover two days, with the primary involvement of court personnel and attorneys to occur on Day One.

A primary goal of the training is to confront our individual values and biases in working with fathers to move towards a demonstrated acknowledgement of the importance of a father's role in the life of his child(ren) by all participants in the system. The Father Engagement Workgroup believes it is essential that the Court lead the efforts to ensure the active engagement of fathers in child welfare cases. The Workgroup believes that obtaining approval for Continuing Legal Education credits will be an important tool to ensure attendance of attorneys at the training.

Survey

In 2010, the Father Engagement Workgroup sent a survey to counties across the state to assess the identification, participation and engagement of fathers in dependency cases. The response rate of 62% was excellent. The survey responses clearly indicated that father engagement was receiving minimal effort throughout the state.

For the past three years the Father Engagement Workgroup has developed a number of tools to increase the level and quality of father engagement and participation. The Workgroup developed protocols for locating fathers and establishing paternity, developed best practices for engagement of fathers, identified barriers and solutions to father engagement, developed a model for implementation of a local fathers' support group, developed and distributed brochures promoting the importance of father engagement, and developed bench cards to be included in the Dependency Bench Book. Efforts are currently underway to implement a statewide cross-systems training as outlined in this report.

In 2012, the State Roundtable approved a follow-up survey to determine if the Workgroup's efforts to bring the issue of father engagement to the forefront have successfully resulted in increased father engagement and participation to achieve permanency for children in the child welfare system. A second survey was sent to counties across the state and a response rate of 57% (representing 77% of the children in care) was received. The survey results are included in this report as Attachment B.

At first glance the results were not what the Workgroup had envisioned. But after careful analysis and an excellent visual report (with much appreciation to Shelby Line), the results demonstrate a significant increase in the identification of fathers and an increase in the active participation of fathers, both at court hearings and in the planning process. The brochures have been helpful in the engagement process. The need for additional training as is currently planned was clearly established and requested. While improvements have indeed occurred, the effort to engage fathers must be continual in each county.

Congregate Care Discussion

The Father Engagement Workgroup was also asked by the State Roundtable to generate a discussion regarding how the use of congregate care applies to the efforts of the Workgroup. The Workgroup asserts that there is a close connection between the level of father engagement and the need for the use of congregate care. The Workgroup asserts that if more fathers were engaged and greater effort was exerted to engage paternal family members, the level of congregate care would decrease. Specific recommendations from the Workgroup are included in this report.

Conclusion

In 2009, at the direction of the State Roundtable, the Father Engagement Workgroup was formed with the following mission:

- ***To increase the involvement of fathers and paternal family in order to protect children; promote strong families, promote child well-being and provide timely permanency for children.***

Over the past 4 years, in order to fulfill this mission, the Workgroup:

- ***Developed protocols and bench cards to identify and locate fathers and to establish paternity;***
- ***Identified solutions to barriers faced by fathers;***
- ***Created brochures addressing the roles and responsibilities of fathers;***
- ***Identified best practices for father engagement programs;***
- ***Collaborated with CWRC to write a cross- system curriculum for engaging fathers; and***
- ***Conducted a survey that clearly demonstrates our work improved the quality and frequency of father involvement in the child dependency system across Pennsylvania.***

In recognition of these accomplishments, we will be requesting the State Roundtable to disband the Father Engagement Workgroup.

Congregate Care Recommendations

At the request of the State Roundtable, the Father Engagement Workgroup was asked to address the issue of congregate care. Following are the recommendations from the Workgroup from the perspective of fathers and paternal family:

1. Diligent review of contractual obligations with congregate care providers must occur to determine compliance regarding each child placed in the facility by the court. The agency and GAL must diligently advocate for congregate care compliance in regard to services, visits, education, medication, discharge planning, family involvement, length of stay.
2. Children placed in congregate care should receive more frequent periodic judicial review to determine father and paternal family to the 5th degree resource availability. This will avoid placement and ensure community based services.
3. Paternal family should be part of the decision making process from the very start to avoid placement in congregate care.
4. Court and agency shall hold the facility responsible for communicating directly with both parents regarding treatment, medication, education, and behavioral issues.

Father Engagement Workgroup Recommendations

The members of the Father Engagement Workgroup respectfully recommend the following:

1. The State Roundtable support state-wide invitation and attendance at the revised Father Engagement training to commence in the Fall of 2013 and include the dependency court judges and hearing officers, child welfare staff, JPOs, GALs, CASA, parents' counsel and providers and further encourage that invitations be extended to community members (eg., teachers, parents, family center personnel, local roundtable members, etc.).
2. The State Roundtable direct that the Child Welfare Resource Center and the Office of Children and Families in the Courts (OCFC) coordinate the scheduling of the training.
3. The State Roundtable direct that the OCFC request CLE credits for the Father Engagement training.
4. The State Roundtable encourage all Local Children's Roundtables to discuss the Father Engagement 2013 Survey results.
5. The State Roundtable request that CPCMS collect data to measure outcomes with respect to father engagement.

6. The State Roundtable permit the disbanding of the Father Engagement Workgroup, acknowledging that its assigned tasks have been completed.

As the Father Engagement workgroup was coming to an end, there was a sense of sadness evident throughout the group. It became very clear to the participants that working on this issue for many of us was very personal. Each member brought a level of passion, meaning and commitment that far exceeded a typical work assignment. As such, the members of the workgroup decided to include their thoughts about the workgroup and their reasons for participating. Listed below are the quotes from the Father Engagement Workgroup members following the final meeting:

Being part of this workgroup for me is ironic. I am who I am due to my father – or lack thereof. In many ways his absence has left me broken. To not be loved by my father is the painful secret that I carry with me. I used to talk about him and pretend we were close. I hope my work will help heal (or prevent) the emptiness for someone else.

The importance of fathers has a personal significance for me. When I met my husband, he was a single dad of a three year old girl. He was fortunate to have the wherewithal to overcome the obstacles he faced. Many men are not. We owe it to the children we serve to strengthen their relationship with both parents. I write this today- 03/21/2013 (the 25th anniversary of my father's death).

The last time I saw my dad was 35 years ago when he walked out the door and left our family. I missed out on so much, but he missed out on more. The workgroup is going to guide families to a more positive future because dads are involved.

I am who I am because of my dad. Our children deserve the same opportunity.

The importance of fathers must be conveyed to everyone working with them. A shift in practice and culture is needed and this workgroup helped move that message to the forefront of practice.

Kids need dads! My father was always there for me. I can't imagine growing up without him. It has been a privilege to work with dedicated advocates for fathers.

Dads are loving, caring and concerned.

Being asked to join the Father Engagement Workgroup was an honor. I wanted to be part of seeing more fathers be able to have their children. More and more fathers are stepping up each year.

As a step-parent, I have always been conscious of the role of both parents in decision making for their child(ren). Participating in the workgroup, made me more aware of the role and importance of fathers. It made me more sensitive in court proceedings, that fathers are respectfully acknowledged and valued for the important role they play in the life of the child(ren).

Proverbs 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

As a participant in this workgroup, I found many things that were needed and necessary to strengthen the role of fathers in Pennsylvania. As a father, I had the distinct privilege of sharing my experiences with the group. It was more intimate for me because I was a live subject and not just a computer survey. I was glad that I volunteered to have an impact on change in Pennsylvania and hopefully it will have an impact nationwide...

I love my dad!

Attachment A

Building and Sustaining Father Engagement

The following is a brief summary of the PA Child Welfare Resource Center curriculum titled 305: Building and Sustaining Father Engagement. Delivered over a 2 day period (12 hours of instruction), the curriculum is intended to be a cross-system presentation for a multi-disciplinary audience such as child welfare professionals, attorneys, hearing officers, judges, providers and community partners. The curriculum is divided into twelve sections focusing on best practices for both the court and agency.

Section I: Welcome and Introductions

Participants are introduced to the trainer and to each other. Participants will be asked to define their expectations for the training and learn what will and will not be covered in the workshop.

Section II: Values, Roles and Responsibilities

Participants learn the importance of engaging fathers in child welfare practice. Since our personal values and experiences often determine our views about fathers, a series of guided exercises will encourage participants to identify and acknowledge personal feelings about fathers. Emphasis is placed on recognizing and managing personal perceptions, bias and stereotypes when working with fathers.

After addressing values and biases, child welfare professionals, judges, hearing officers, parent attorneys and guardians ad litem discuss their individual roles and responsibilities to engage fathers in a strength-based and solution focused manner.

Section III: Protocol for Engagement and the Father Engagement Bench Card

Bench cards addressing protocols for engaging fathers in court and agency practice are discussed. After participants discuss the application of the Father Engagement Bench Card, this segment concludes with participants applying the protocols to actual family scenarios.

Section IV: Father's Impact on Child Well-Being

Participants explore the positive impact that fathers have on child well-being and development. Content focuses on the role of fathers as providers, protectors, nurturers, and teachers.

**Section V:
Identifying and Locating Fathers and Establishing Paternity**

Protocols for identifying and locating fathers and establishing paternity are utilized to teach participants about the importance of meaningfully engaging fathers in the child welfare system, establishing and maintaining connections with fathers and paternal relatives and expediting permanency.

Emphasis is placed on the practice of considering the transfer of custody to fathers prior to placement of the child.

Information regarding concurrent planning, Family Finding, and diligent search processes are presented by way of didactic instruction and group activity.

**Section VI:
The Process of Engaging Men**

Information and instruction will address the unique processes and approaches that must be employed to successfully communicate with fathers and men in general. With the understanding that males and females utilize different modes of communication, participants will learn the intricacies of male communication styles while reflecting on personal perceptions and biases covered in an earlier section.

Clips from popular films will be used to demonstrate the differences between male and female communication styles. An activity will assist participants in better understanding their own perceptions of masculinity and femininity, and better understand their communication styles.

Finally, information on male learning styles is presented from a 2012 study conducted by The National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse.

**Section VII:
Review and Day 1 Wrap Up**

An interactive game is used to review the content presented throughout the day.

**Section VIII:
Welcome Back and Review of Day 1**

After welcoming participants, day 1 content is briefly reviewed and topics for day 2 are introduced. The focus is on building skills necessary to better engage fathers.

**Section IX:
Overcoming Barriers and Managing Resistance**

Data indicates that fathers experience a host of barriers in the child welfare system. As a result, fathers may demonstrate resistance to working with the system. The group will identify barriers and work with their peers to identify solutions.

The next step examines specific strategies drawn from Motivational Interviewing for overcoming and working with resistance. Once the information is presented, participants will practice their new skills through a role-play activity.

**Section X:
Identifying Strengths and Needs**

Strategies will be presented for identifying both the strengths and needs of the fathers with whom they work. Much of the information is drawn from the strengths perspective as presented by Dennis Saleeby.

The section asks participants to examine clips from a popular film “Evelyn.” It is the story of an Irish man who loses custody of his children and fights to overcome his own barriers to achieve reunification. Participants utilize aspects of safety assessment to draw conclusions and identify strengths of the main characters of the film.

**Section XI:
Identifying Formal and Informal Supports**

Information is presented about effective fathering programs. The following concepts are presented as characteristics of effective programs:

- Value fathers and the role they play;
- Address a father’s needs;
- Support; not punish;
- Respect gender differences in parenting;
- Provide positive male models;
- Provide services at times and locations that are accessible to fathers; and
- Provide an environment that is inviting to fathers.

In addition to formal programs, methods for connecting fathers with informal supports such as family and community members will be stressed. Participants will have an opportunity to network and discuss effective fathering programs in their respective areas.

**Section XII:
Wrap Up and Evaluations**

During this final section of the workshop, an interactive activity will challenge participants to recall information from both days and demonstrate comprehension.

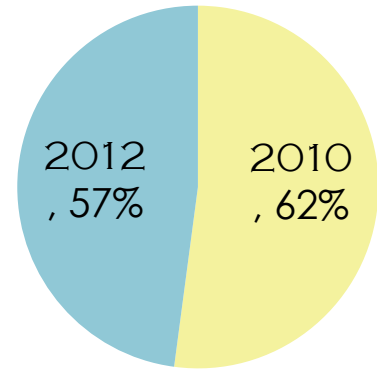
Evaluations will be completed.

ATTACHMENT B

FATHER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

2010 of the 67 surveys distributed, 41 were returned with a response rate of 62%

2012 of the 67 surveys distributed, 38 were returned with a response rate of 57%



2010

Have an identified non-resident father?

Of the 37 respondents that completed this question:

- the *range* of responses provided was 0-98%
- the *average* percent given was 62%
- the *median* percent given was 65%

2012

Have a father who has been named?

Of the 38 respondents that completed this question:

- the *range* of responses provided was 70-100%
- the *average* percent given was 91%
- the *median* percent given was 92%

Once a father is identified, he becomes actively involved?

Of the 36 respondents that completed this question:

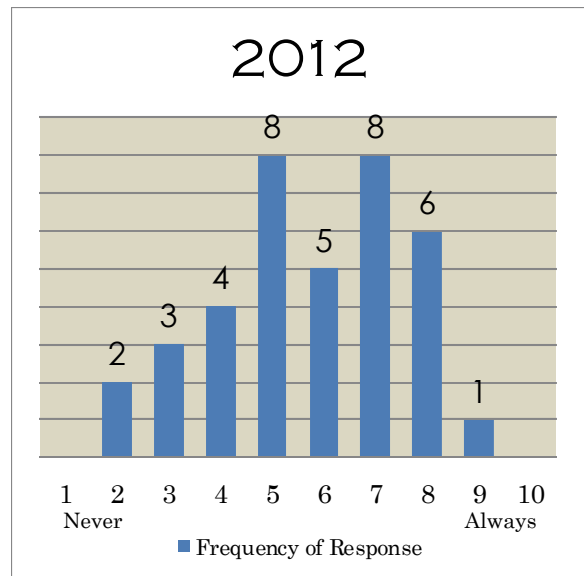
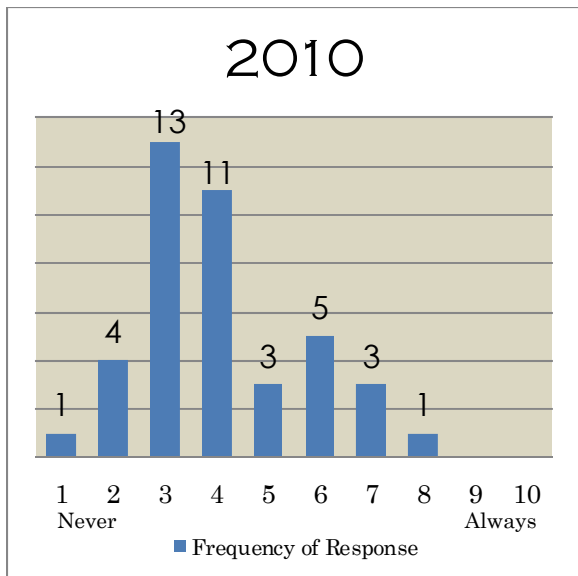
- the *range* of responses provided was 0-100%
- the *average* percent given was 31%
- the *median* percent given was 20%

Once a father is named, he becomes actively involved?

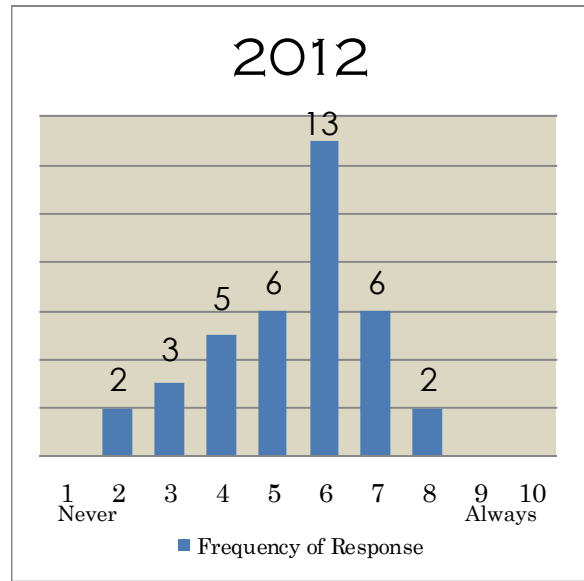
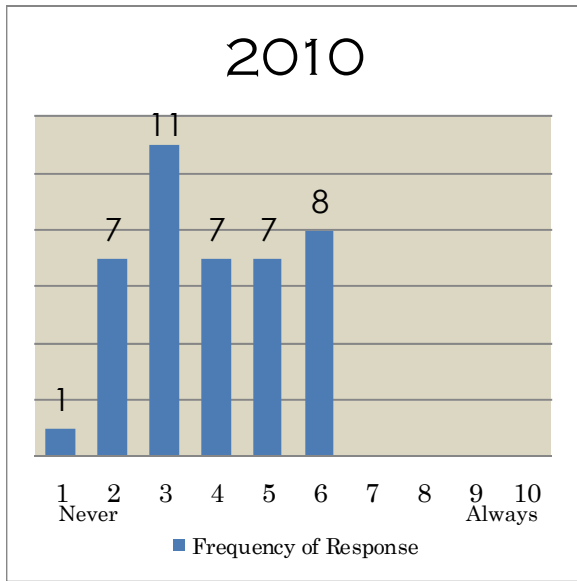
Of the 37 respondents that completed this question:

- the *range* of responses provided was 7-100%
- the *average* percent given was 56%
- the *median* percent given was 58%

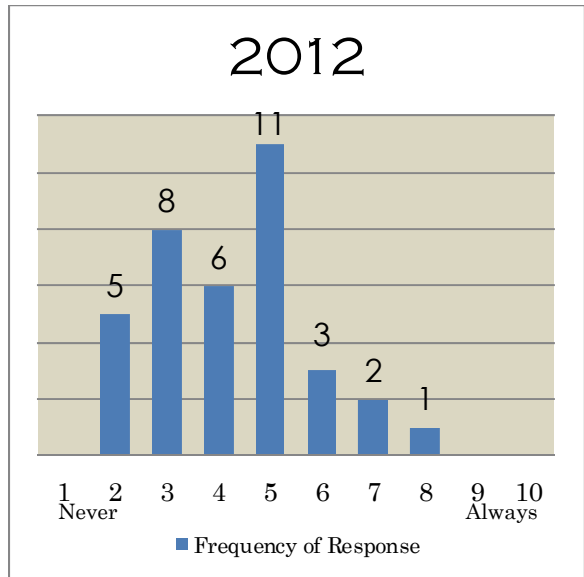
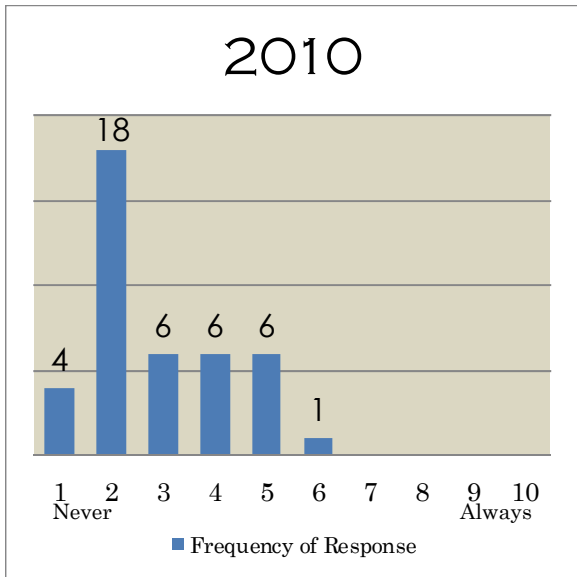
HOW FREQUENTLY DO FATHERS ATTEND COURT HEARINGS?



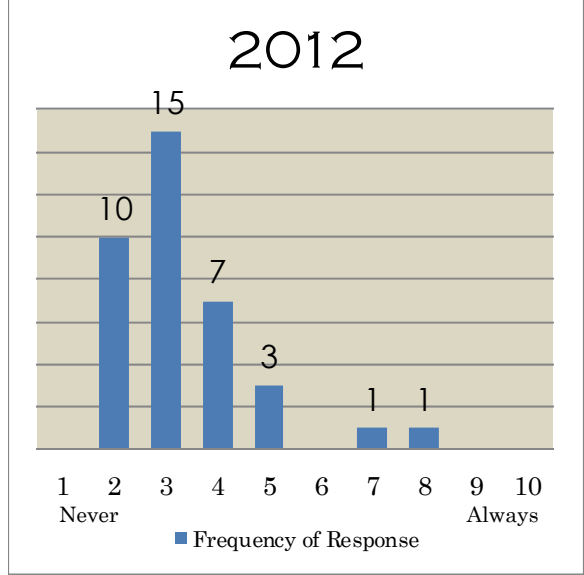
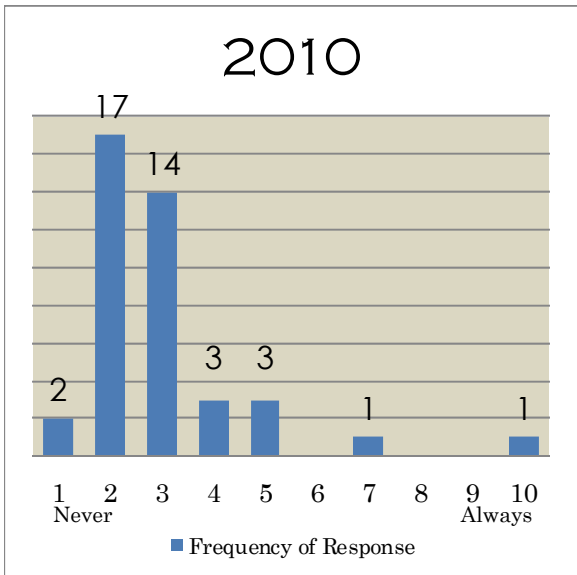
HOW FREQUENTLY DO FATHERS VISIT WITH THEIR CHILDREN?



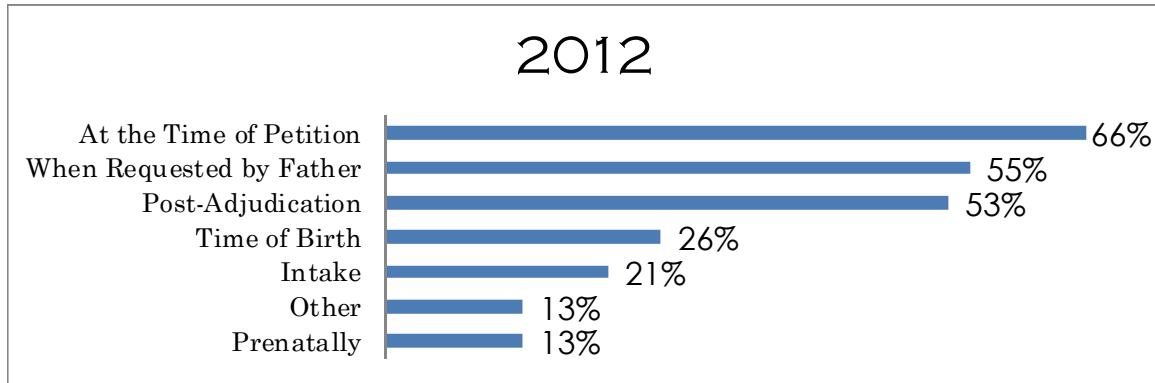
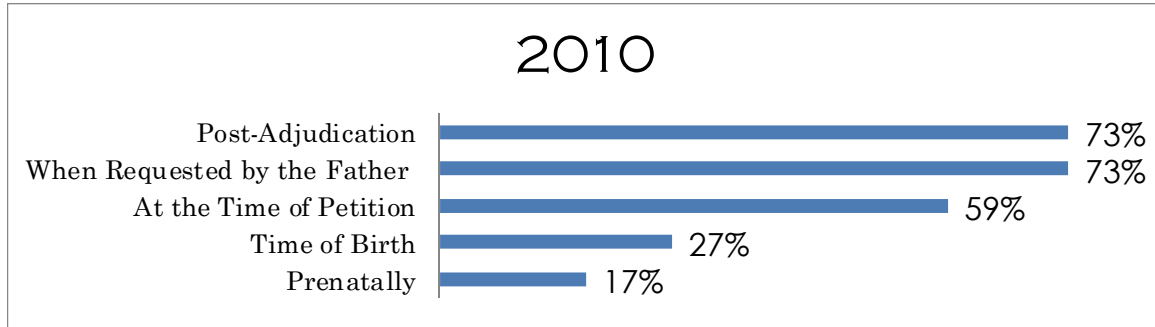
HOW FREQUENTLY DO FATHERS ATTEND PLANNING MEETINGS?



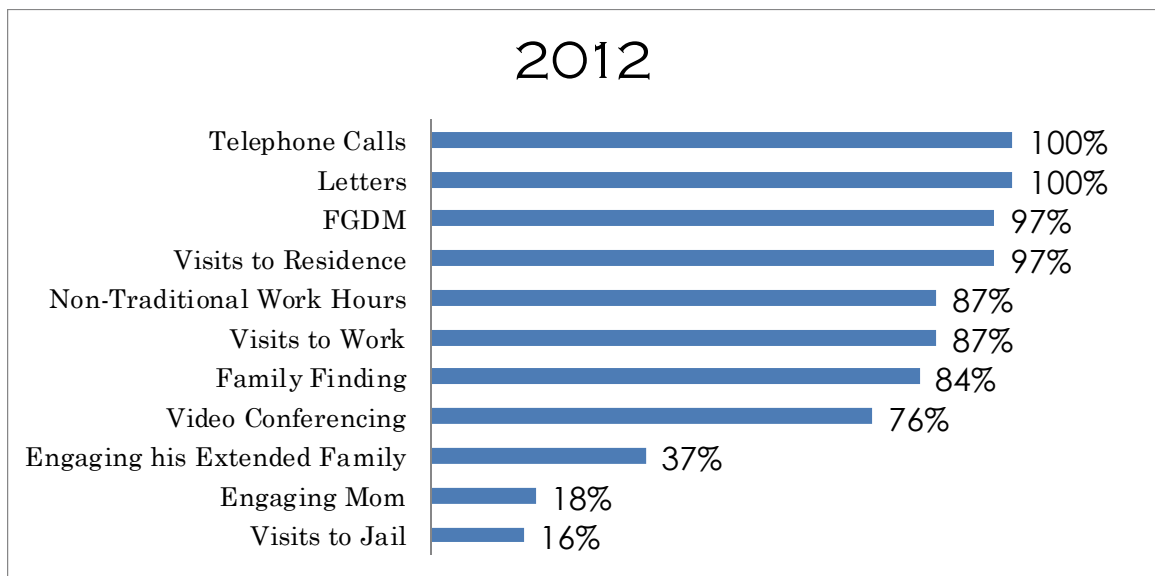
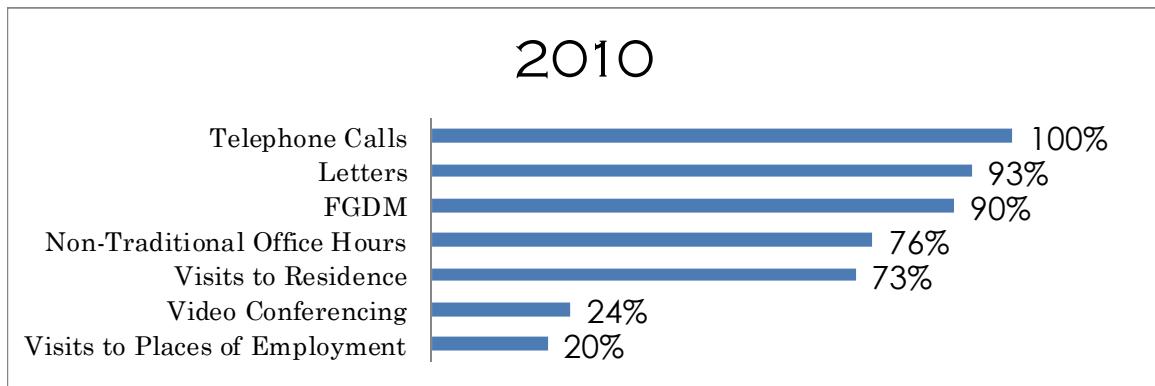
HOW FREQUENTLY DO FATHERS HAVE A CHILD PLACED IN THEIR CUSTODY?



WHEN ARE SERVICES TYPICALLY OFFERED TO FATHERS?

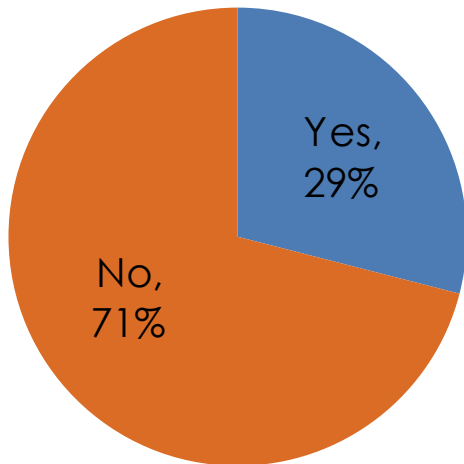


WHAT PRACTICES DO THE AGENCY AND THE COURT USE TO ENGAGE FATHERS?

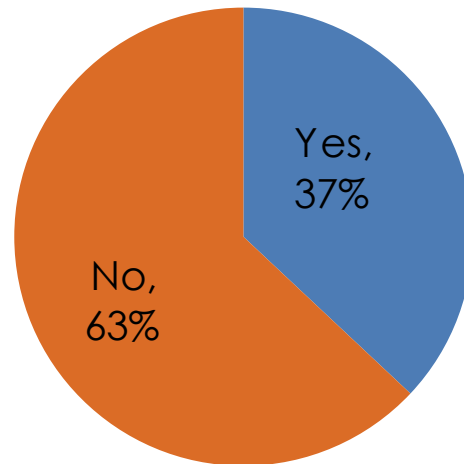


DOES YOUR COUNTY OFFER PROGRAMS GEARED SPECIFICALLY TO FATHERS?

2010

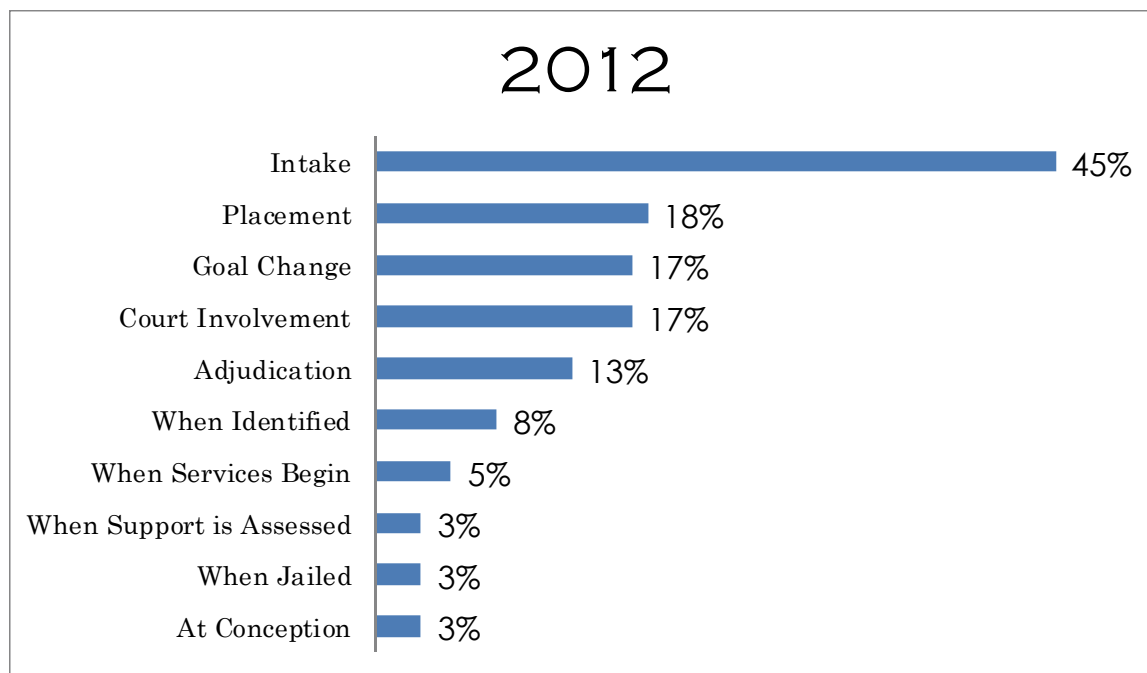


2012



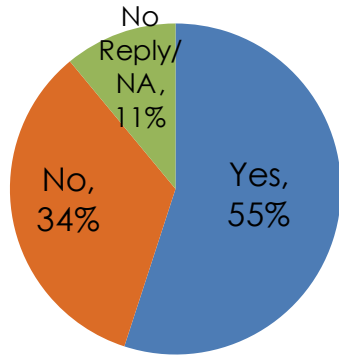
POINT IN THE CASE MOST OFTEN SEEN FATHERS ENGAGED?

2012



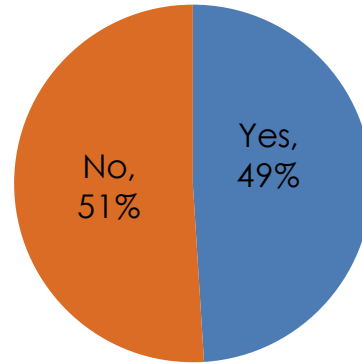
2012

DID YOU DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF FATHER ENGAGING AT YOUR LOCAL CHILDREN'S ROUNDTABLE?



2012

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, DID A CASEWORK STAFF HAVE TRAINING ON FATHER ENGAGEMENT?



IF NO, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN FATHER ENGAGEMENT TRAINING?

Yes = 89% No = 11%

2012 WHICH OF THESE RESOURCES HAVE YOU:

	RECEIVED	USED
“Kids Need Dads” Brochure	58%	37%
“Establishing Paternity” Protocol	24%	18%
“Identification and Locating of Father” Protocol	24%	16%
“Barriers and Solutions for Engaging Fathers”	24%	16%
“Best Practices for Father Support Groups”	8%	5%

HAVE ANY OF THESE RESOURCES CHANGED PRACTICE IN YOUR COUNTY AS IT RELATES TO FATHERS?

