

Involvement of Young Fathers with Children and Mothers: Research and Practical Strategies to Promote Well-Being of Families

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+ Disclaimer



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+ Objectives

By the end of this workshop participants will be able to:

- Understand the importance of father involvement and identify strategies fathers can use to engage with their children at any age
- Identify ways to help mothers see and understand the fathers perspective and the importance of the father-child bond
- Describe effective co-parenting strategies young parents can use that benefit the wellbeing of the child
- Identify the necessary skills fathers need to attach and bond with their child during the early stages of development.



+ Introductions and agenda

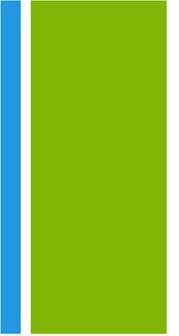
- Introductions
- Agenda for workshop
- 1. Who are young fathers? / Individual response
- 2. How do we engage young fathers? / Small group exercise
- 3. How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?
- Conclusion



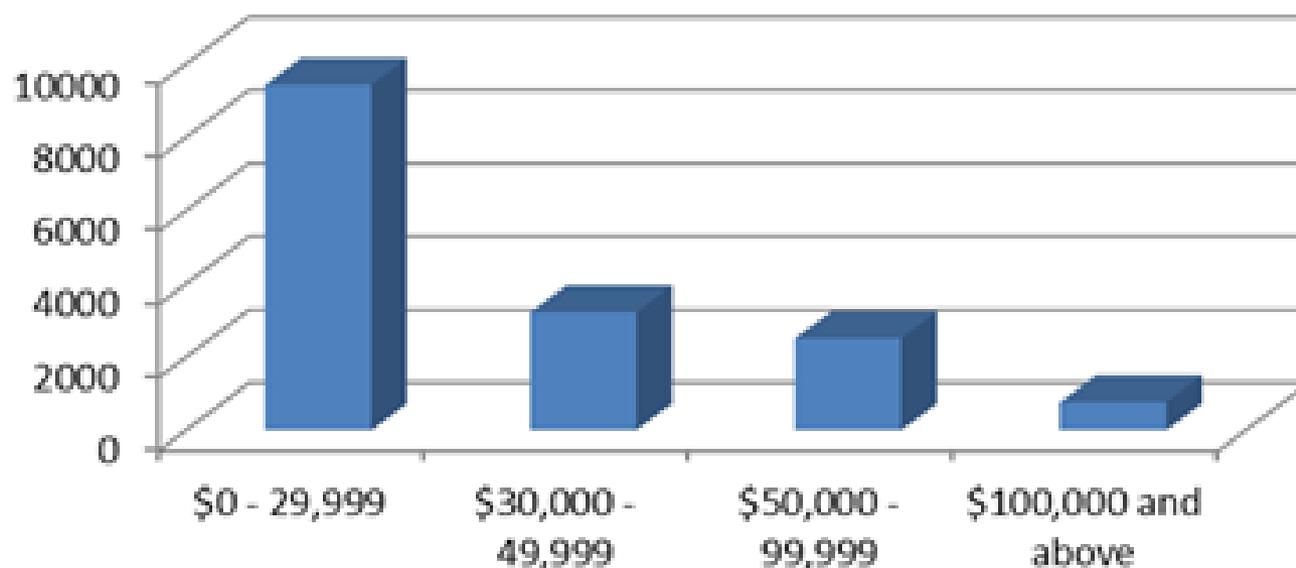
+ Who are young fathers?

They are a heterogenous, diverse group of young men

- Income and education
- Race/ethnicity
- Families of origin – single mother, poverty



Number of children under 18 living with mother only by family income: 2011



Numbers of children in thousands
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2011 Annual Social and Economic Supplement

Internet Release Date: November 2011

+ Who are young fathers?



They face specific life challenges

- Low school attainment
- Health concerns, physical and mental, substance use
- History of incarceration
- Gang involvement
- Limited job opportunities
- Limited interaction with public systems
- Stereotypes
- “Ghosting” – transitory living arrangements apart from friends and family

+ Who are young fathers?

Their interaction with children is limited compared to adult and residential fathers, but many are involved with their children

- % of young fathers highly involved decreases over the first year of child's life (46% to 34%)
- Involvement of young fathers can protect infants as young as 2 months from negative effects of maternal depression
- Involvement could positively alter trajectory of attachment, social-emotional development of children

+ Who are young fathers?



Their involvement with children is limited

- Antecedents of involvement: father, mother, child characteristics; mother/father relationship
- Involvement as resident biological or social fathers
 - Are biological fathers more involved?
- Involvement among nonresident biological fathers
 - Are resident or married fathers more involved?
 - Involvement among incarcerated fathers

+ Who are young fathers?

Research on young fathers is limited

- Data limitations in existing datasets
- Few interventions evaluated
- Better measures (ex: family “type”)
- Questions remain
 - Should all fathers be involved?
 - What about single fathers or incarcerated fathers?

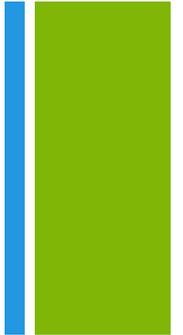


+ Who are young fathers?

- Exercise – Individual Responses
- *Jot down two things individually at your seat.*
- *First, what do you know now about young men that you didn't know at the beginning of the session?*
- *Second, which questions remain unanswered for you?*



+ How do we engage young fathers with children?



Where do we meet young fathers?

- Responsible fatherhood programs
- Child support court
- Education or employment programs
- Correctional facilities

+ How do we engage young fathers with children?*

How do we meet them?

- Staff expertise and background

Do we engage young men?

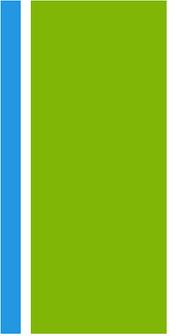
- Voluntary participation
- Mandated participation



+ How do we engage young fathers with children?

How do we recruit young fathers?

Are these strategies successful?



+ How do we engage young fathers with children?



Do young fathers stick with our programs?

Are there problems with retention and follow up?

How do we solve those problems?

+ How do we engage young fathers with children?

Do they see their children outside of programs? Where and how?

Do our programs include programming with children?
Do they encourage fathers to interact in developmentally-appropriate ways?



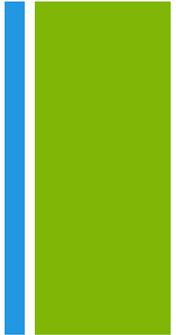
+ How do we engage young fathers with children?

Strategies to encourage young fathers' interaction with children

- Start with mother/father relationship and facilitate cooperation
- Encourage fathers to understand value of time that they can spend with children
- Promote children's literacy by reading to them or participating in school
- Teach fathers about developmental needs
- Help fathers to take part in regular medical care, such as visits to doctor

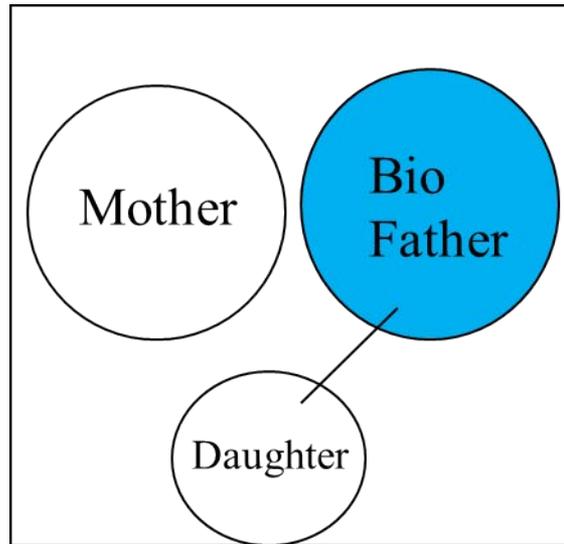
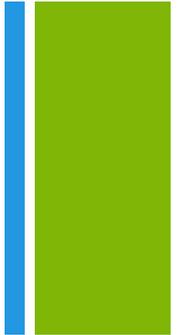


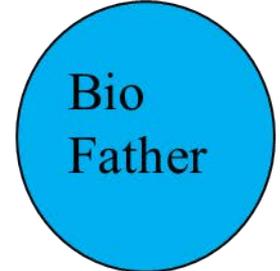
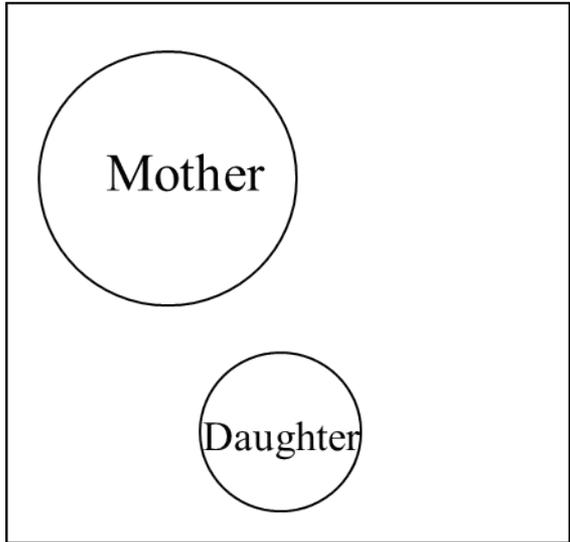
+ How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?

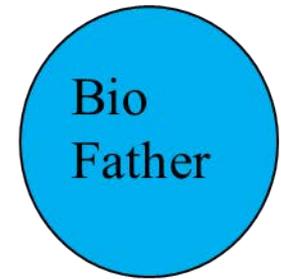
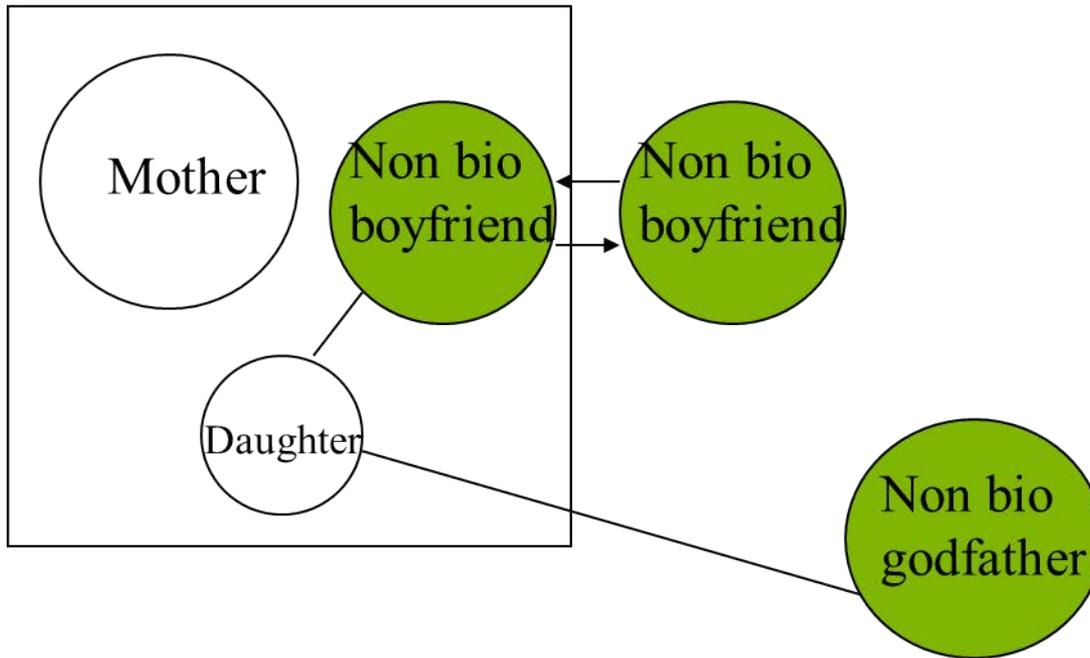


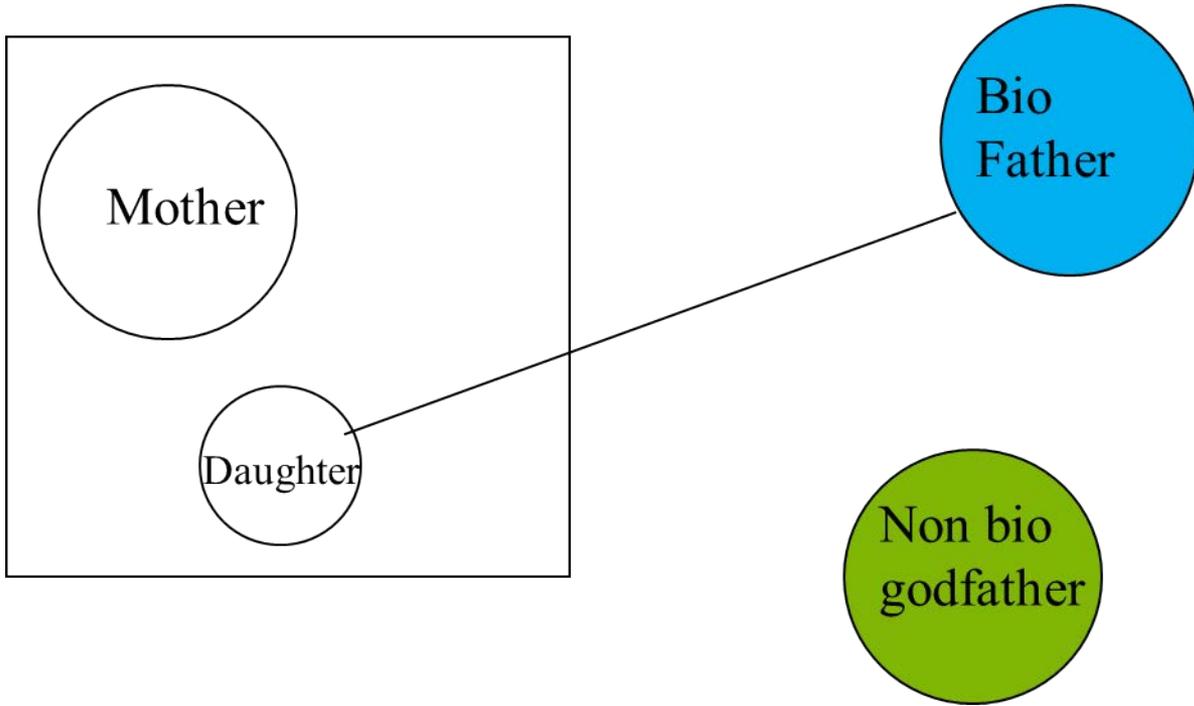
How are these young families “complex”?

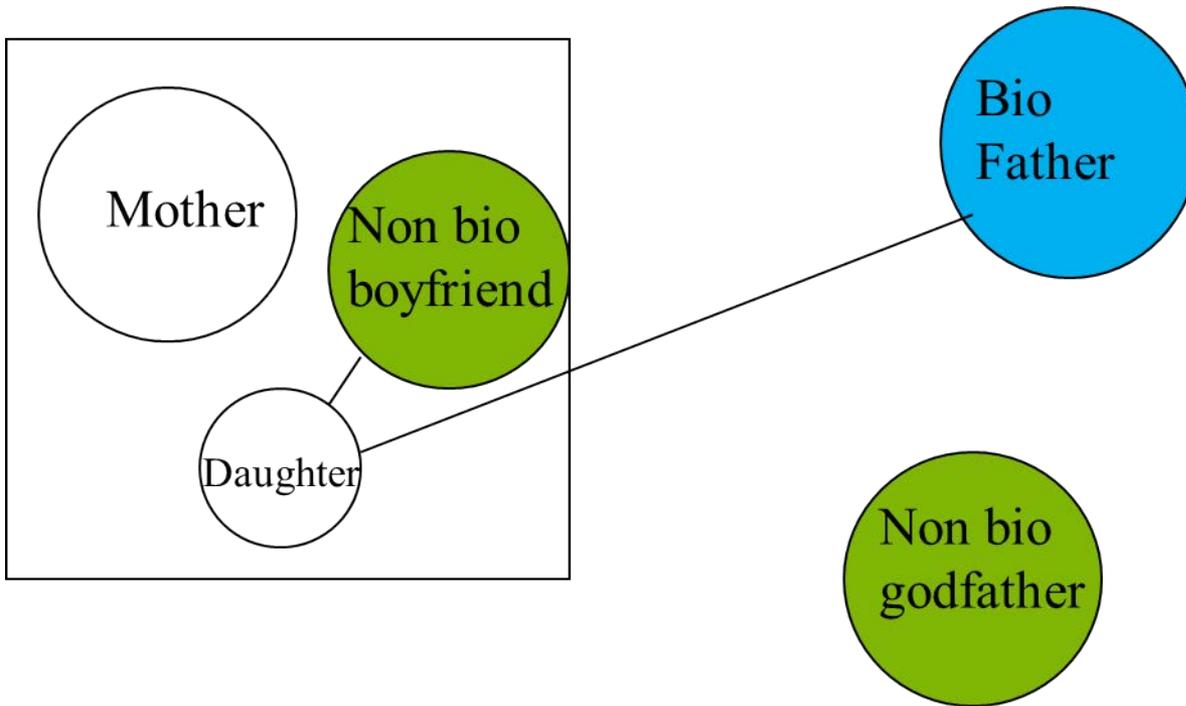
- Across households
- Biological and social fathering
- Extended kin networks
- Multiple partner parenting
- Change over time

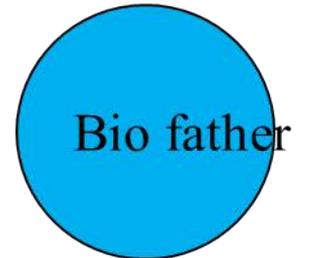
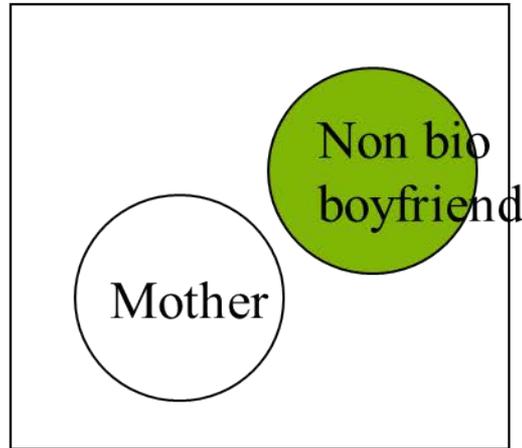
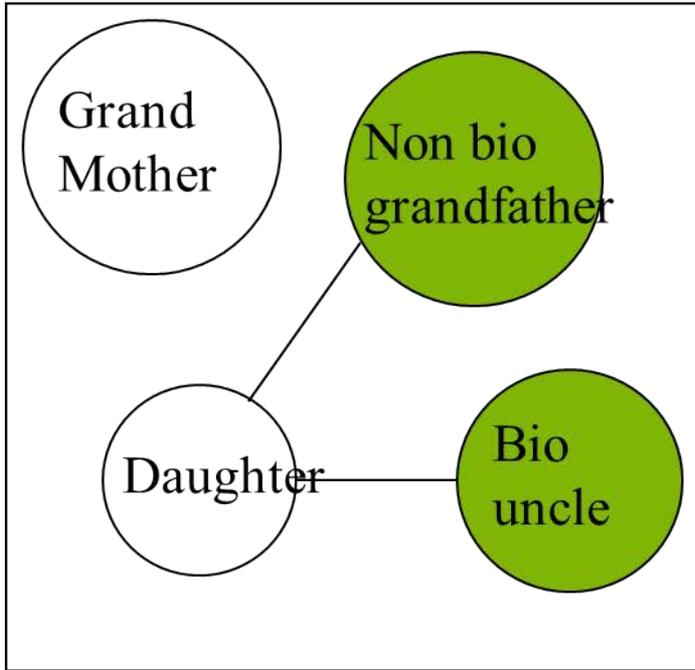


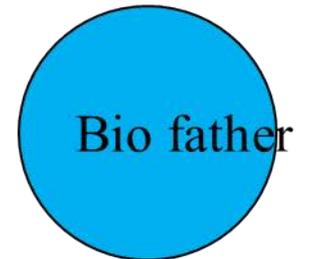
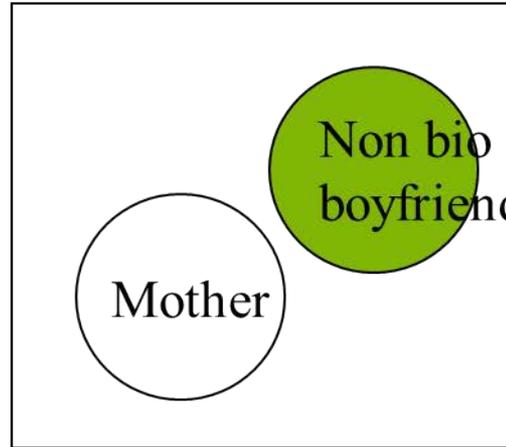
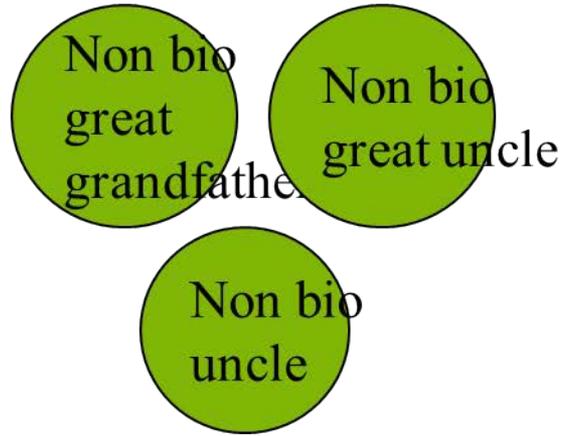
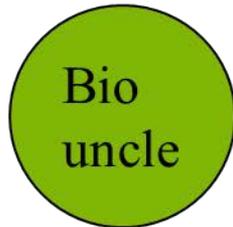
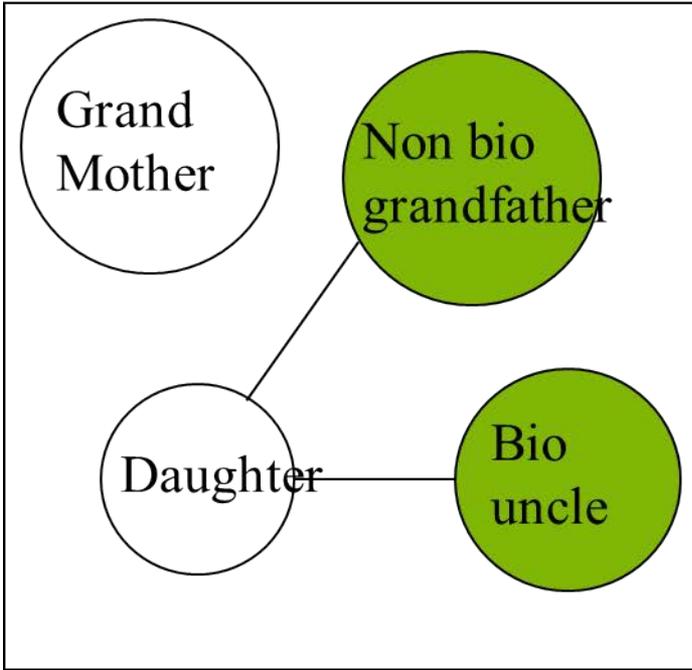












+ How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?

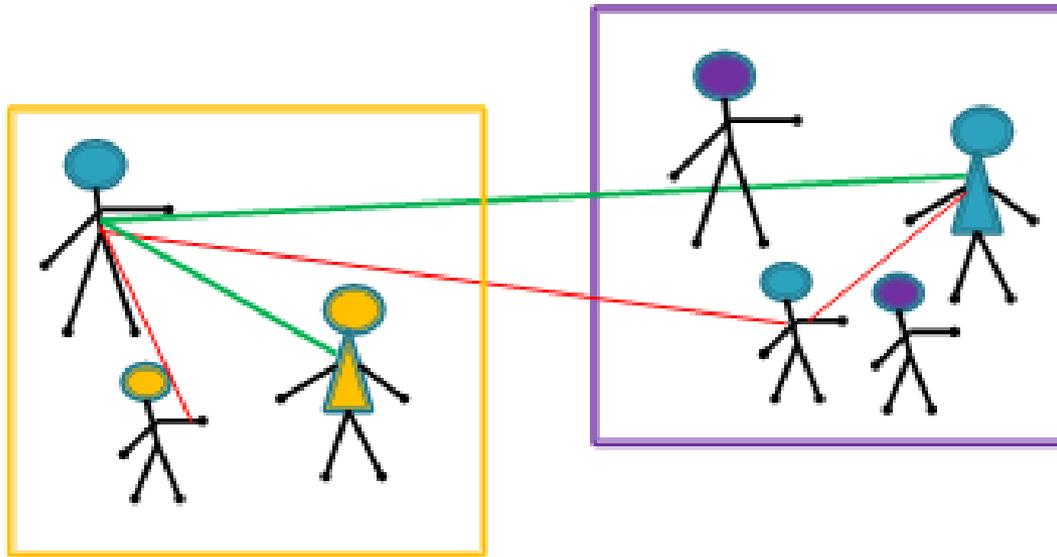
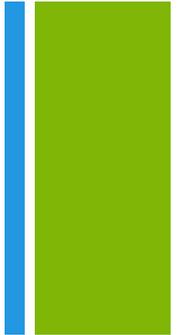
Families as systems of relationships

- Coparent relationship
- Partner relationship
- Parent/child relationship
- Parent/parent/child relationship
- Parents/multiple children relationships
- Sibling relationships
- Maternal and paternal kin
- Intergenerational relationships



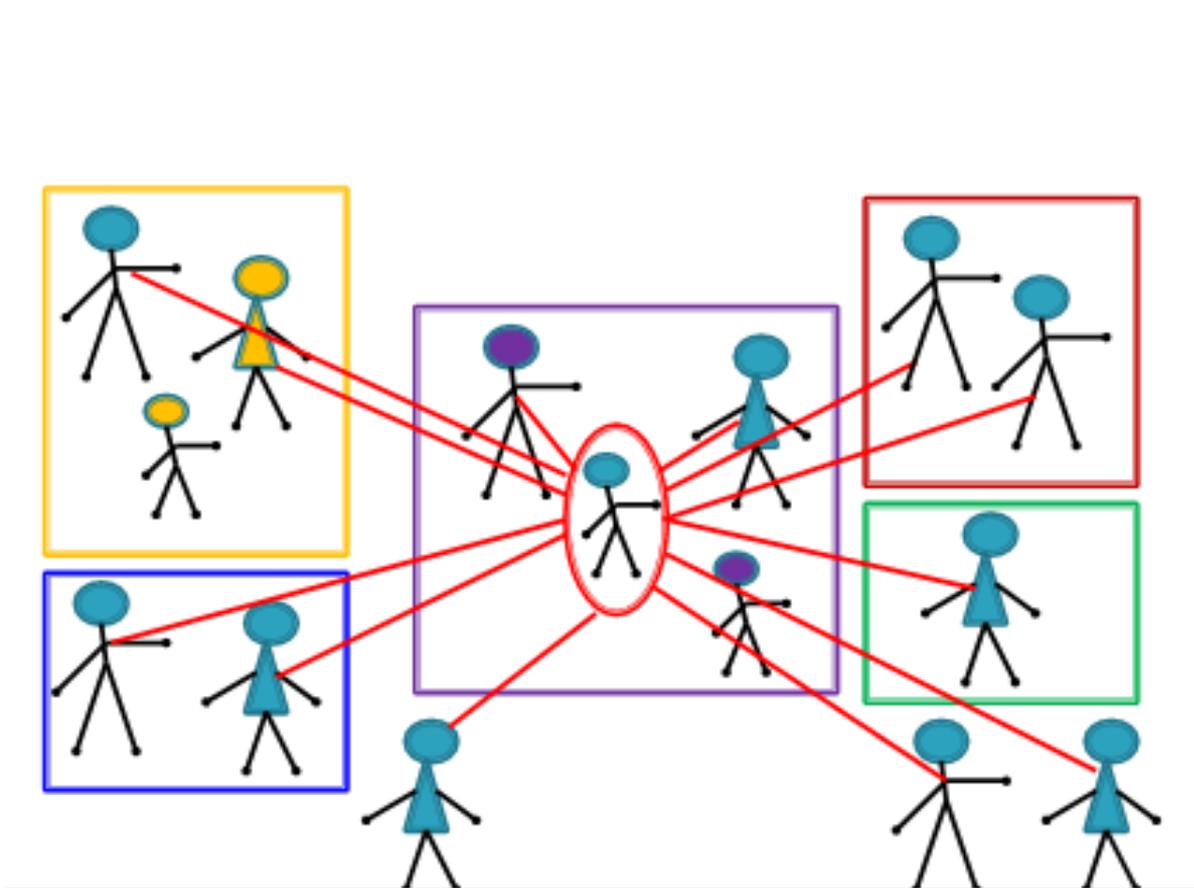


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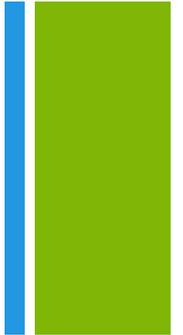


EXTENDED MULTIGENERATIONAL NETWORKS





How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?



Coparenting as separate from romantic, sexual, legal, financial aspects of adults' relationship

Coparenting (cooperation and conflict) associated with parental well being, parenting behavior, child outcomes

+ How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?

Coparenting interventions: Strong Foundations at Children's National Medical Center, Washington DC

- Mothers age 15-18, 15-32 weeks pregnant with first baby
- both parents willing to participate
- Prenatal and postpartum
- 5 prenatal group sessions
- 9 postpartum family sessions during well-child pediatric visits for first year
- RCT – both groups integrated into comprehensive primary care



How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?



“When you fight in front of your kids, they know...and that affects them.”

“Because I see, growin’ up, man, fathers never be there for they child. I wanna program to be there for parents so... kids stop growin’ up with one parent. So I wanna make a strong relationship. I wanna program just to get the parents all strong relationship with each other.”

“They might be more comfortable sharing if there were a third party there ‘cause at least they know the other person might not blow up in their face as much...if you did it at home and you try to confront the situation, one or the other might yell, go off, get physical.”

+ How do we promote coparenting skills in complex families?

Coparenting interventions: Strong Foundations at Children's National Medical Center, Washington DC

Program engagement

- Couples together attended average of 3.2 of 5 prenatal sessions
- At least one member of couple attended average of 4 sessions

Quantitative rating (scale + 1-5)

- Very helpful (4.4)
- Liked the class material (4.3)
- Likely to use what they learned (4.2)

Qualitative comments

- "No one has ever talked to us about this stuff!"
- "I'm noticing how so many things can go wrong as parents but I feel like now I have positive ways to deal with it, not always being negative."



How do we engage young fathers with children?



Exercise – Small Group Discussion

Break into small groups of 4-5. Decide on which type of community-based program you represent – but it must be one that has engagement with young fathers as a mandate.

First, what are some of the challenges that you face in recruiting, engaging, and retaining fathers and children?

Second, discuss how fathers' relationships with mothers may complicate or support your efforts to link fathers with children. Make sure your programs engage the full range of parents: coparents in committed relationships; coparents who are not in intimate relationships; and coparents with multiple partnering relationships.

+ Feedback and discussion

