

NWX-OS-OGC-RKVL

Moderator: Jacquelyn McCain

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Coordinator: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question and answer session of today's call. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, please disconnect at this time. I would now like to turn the conference over to Ms. Jacquelyn McCain. You may begin.

Jacquelyn McCain: Thank you (Millicent). Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and good morning to those of you on the west coast. My name is Jacquelyn McCain. I'm the project officer in the Office of Adolescent Health and I welcome you to today's Webinar for PAS grantees entitled Together We Can: The Important Role of Co-parenting for Expectant and Parenting Teens and Young Adults. We have three dynamic speakers that I will introduce in just a few moments but I would like to do just a couple of items of housekeeping for you.

The first thing, if you look at the very top of your screen, you're going to see a number of icons. On the left hand side, there's an icon third over from the left that says Q&A. If you click on that, you'll have the opportunity to type in a question and at some point during the Webinar -- likely at the very end -- your questions will be answered by our speakers. Also, we will be doing questions

and answers again at the end of the presentation where you'll be able to verbally call in and ask your question live.

We will also -- as a warning -- for some of you may be having trouble here a mass user. This platform seems to be a little tricky for using Mac computers but I'm happy to tell you that, as usual, these slides will be made available as well as the actual Webinar recording on the OAH web site and the last item of housekeeping, at the very end of the presentation, there will be a link available that will connect you to a survey and I ask that you please take a look at the survey and answer the questions. The questions help us to continue developing our Webinar programs for you.

So, with that, I will go ahead and introduce our three speakers. We have Dr. Mindy Scott who's a research scientist in the parenting and family dynamics in reproductive health and family formation areas at Child Trends. She's involved in a number of research and evaluation projects focusing on teen pregnancy prevention as well as health and relationships and responsible fatherhood. She's conducted research on adolescents and young adult relationships, the association between adolescent risky sexual behaviors and young adult reproductive health outcome, she founded in healthy marriage and relationship education for teens and adults.

We also have with us today Dr. Brandon Stratford who is also a research scientist in the youth development research area at Child Trends. He received his PhD in public health at Johns Hopkins University with the focus on child and adolescent health. He has worked as an educator and a school based social worker in the United States and Latin America and has experience implementing a number of evidence based programs related to students behavioral health as well as positive parenting behaviors in both English and Spanish.

Our third presenter today is Dr. Paul Florsheim. Dr. Florsheim's primary interest are adolescent mental health and the development, prevention and treatment programs for high risk youth. At the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, he holds a joint appointment with the (Helen Beta School) of Social Welfare, CAVHR and the school of public health. He's also a scientist at CAVHR in the center for urban population health. Dr. Florsheim earned his bachelors degree in history from (Wellgreen) University, a masters degree in social sciences from the University of Chicago and a doctorate in clinical psychology from Northwestern University. So, with that, Dr. Mindy, I'm turning it over to you. Thank you.

Mindy Scott: Okay, great. Thank you Jackie. Hi everybody. I'm going to start today's Webinar by reviewing the objectives for the Webinar. First we will describe both positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting. We'll also list at least three ways in which co-parenting can benefit teen parents and their children, we'll identify links between positive co-parenting relationships and teen father engagement and we'll then describe the content of common co-parenting approaches.

In addition to the Q&A feature and through which you can submit questions -- either written questions or over the phone -- we also have a few interactive polls that we'll be conducting through the Webinar and I'll walk you through each of the polls when we get there and we're going to start one now to get everybody started. I'm taking us to the full feature and what we're interested here is just to learn about grantee - a little bit more about the grantees that we have on the line. So, this poll is asking you to tell us what the primary setting is where you run your program and I'm going to open the polls now and if you could select one of these answers to let us know the setting where your

programming occurs. You can submit your answer now. All right. I'm going to leave it open for a few more seconds. Okay. Great.

I'm going to close the polls now and show everybody the results and thank you for participating and here, it looks like the majority of the participants today are implementing their programs in a community based setting or school based setting or a home based setting. So, some diversity but a large number implementing programs in community base settings and this helps us to get a sense of where these programs are happening and helps to think about suggestions we can give for addressing co-parenting and programs in diverse settings. So, thank you for participating and we'll have a couple more polls like that. So, it helps with that feature.

Okay. So, I'm going to begin by defining co-parenting. We'll look at a number of multiple but overlapping perspectives on the meaning of co-parenting. For example, one definition -- as shown on this slide -- describes co-parenting as shared decision making or the degree of support and collaboration between parents or caregivers regarding the wellbeing of a child. This definition highlights a number of key themes that are important to the concept of co-parenting.

First, co-parenting emphasizes shared decision making and support and collaboration between parents or caregivers, all of which are focused on the wellbeing of the child. It is important to note that co-parenting does not always have to occur between two biological parents and it may not even be appropriate to always encourage more interaction and more co-parenting between two biological parents but the point is that it can be beneficial for two caregivers to come together to collaborate in raising a child and it really doesn't matter who these two people are. For example, if a grandparent is

helping to raise a young mother or a young father's child, the grandmother and the young parent would be working together with a co-parenting relationship.

These issues are particularly relevant when implementing co-parenting programs for teens and adults with diverse cultural backgrounds. In many cultures such as some Asian cultures and African American culture, additional adults often serve in a parenting or co-parenting role. Cultural values can also play a role in the perceptions that caregivers have of their co-parenting roles and responsibilities. For example, some cultural or gender norms and values may shape how comfortable fathers feel about taking on certain co-parenting roles and responsibilities.

Co-parenting can also be described as an enterprise undertaken by two or more adults who together take on the care and upbringing of children for whom they share responsibility. So, again, we see the focus is on - the relationship is on the child and the relationship parents have directly related to that child.

This third definition also highlights the interaction of two individuals and again, this could be any individual who are jointly responsible for a child. This definition also emphasizes the ultimate goal of a successful co-parenting relationship which is to promote the wellbeing and positive development of children.

The co-parenting relationship between two caregivers operates within a system of interrelated relationships between family members. Within a family system, you have ties between each caregiver and the child and between the two caregivers themselves. Each of these relationships are distinct from the others and all influence each other. On this slide, we've highlighted the relationship between one caregiver. For example, a young mother and her

child. This relationship focuses on the caregivers parenting behaviors and engagement with the child that is separate from what the other caregiver is doing and also separate from what the two caregivers do together. The second caregiver will also have their own distinct relationship directly with the child as highlighted here.

Another part of the family system is the relationship between parents or caregivers. For parents who are in a romantic relationship, this relationship would consist of dimensions like relationship satisfaction, intimacy, conflict and other aspects of a healthy or unhealthy relationship. For parents who aren't in a relationship or if a child is being raised by other caregivers, this relationship can still be defined by the nature and quality of the interactions that take place between two caregivers.

The co-parenting relationship is distinct from each of the other family relationships that we just reviewed. This relationship is also between two caregivers but is solely focused on the interactions that take place between the two that are specifically related to the child they're raising together. This relationship continues to exist even if parents are not in a romantic relationship with each other. The definitions for co-parenting that we just reviewed, emphasize a number of different dimensions that are important to co-parenting. This is a multi-dimensional concept that can have both positive and negative qualities.

It is important that co-parenting programs address both the positive and the negative aspects of co-parenting relationships and to help you get a sense of what those different dimensions are, we'll review a number of common positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting. More positive co-parenting is often characterized by parent supportiveness of the other parent and by the level of cooperation between the two parents. In positive co-parenting

relationships, the decisions and responsibilities for the child's care and upbringing are shared relatively equally, parents communicate with each other about how to raise the child and how the child is doing and parents develop effective ways to manage conflict between themselves.

Effective conflict management and conflict resolution skills can also be applied more broadly to other relationships beyond the co-parenting relationships. Parents can support each other in a number of other ways including providing financial support or providing other material resources. So, when we're thinking about supportive co-parenting relationships, we really are speaking specifically about support in the relationship between parents or caregivers as it relates to raising their child together.

The main negative aspects of co-parenting include co-parenting conflict or disagreement over how to raise a child and behavior that undermines the role of the other caregiver in raising a child. For example, caregivers may disagree about discipline and other parenting practices, schooling where the child lives or how the other parent spends money on the child. Caregivers may actively undermine or weaken the efforts of the other caregiver to contribute to decisions in these areas.

So, for our next poll, we want to learn even more about the grantees that are participating today. Now that we have a sense of what co-parenting is, we want to know whether you are addressing co-parenting in your programs. We're going to open up our second poll. Okay. It should be open now so please - you can respond yes or no to the question of whether you are addressing co-parenting currently in your program. Okay. I'll keep the poll open for a few more seconds. I'm going to close the poll now and we can see the results here.

The large majority, 89% of the listeners today are addressing co-parenting in their programs which is very promising to hear and hopefully the information that we are giving you today can help to support you in those efforts and in improving those efforts and for the participants that are not addressing co-parenting in their programs, the information we provide will also be helpful to give you a sense of where to start if you are hoping to address co-parenting eventually in your programs and we'll give you some information on how to go about initiating those efforts.

I did want to request that participants who are already addressing co-parenting in their programs, at the end of the Webinar, during the Q&A session, if you could provide us with a written comment or tell us over the phone what curricula or other approaches you are using could be very helpful so that together as a group we can learn about the various approaches that are being used.

Okay. Next I want to talk about why co-parenting matters. A number of research studies have examined the influence of different positive and negative dimensions of co-parenting on child wellbeing. We've summarized some of the findings from that research here and the poll references for the studies that I've mentioned are provided at the end of the slide. Negative aspects of co-parenting such as co-parenting conflict or low levels of support between co-parents have been linked to children's lower cognitive ability, lower social skills, increases in problem behaviors and insecure attachment.

Positive dimensions such as shared decision making and parents agreement about how to raise their children can improve children's social skills and reduce problem behaviors. Positive co-parenting can also have important effects for parents themselves. For example, parents who report engaging in more positive co-parenting behaviors also tend to feel more confident about

their parenting ability. They feel less stress about parenting and have more confidence in their ability to get along with their parenting partner. In fact, most of the positive effects for children that I just mentioned, come as a result of their parents increased confidence.

Co-parenting can also matter for fathers direct involvement with their children. The rationale behind this connection is that when parents can engage in shared child rearing and avoid co-parenting conflict, it is likely that a fathers involvement with his children can be enhanced. Specifically, fathers may be motivated to be more involved with their children if they feel supported by the mother or other caregiver and the quality of the father/child relationship may also be improved. Mothers may also be more likely to encourage and support fathers involvement when they have a more positive co-parenting relationship with their father.

Conversely, the absence of a strong co-parenting relationship between parents or two caregivers may undermine a fathers ability and willingness to be involved. On this slide, you'll notice that there's a double-sided arrow between co-parenting and father engagement. This is presented this way because some research has established a reciprocal link between co-parenting and father engagement where supportive co-parenting results in greater father engagement but father engagement can also lead to more positive co-parenting relationships. So, these two processes are clearly interrelated and they can work together to enhance child wellbeing.

Next, I'd like to provide you with a few examples of how different dimensions of co-parenting can be measured drawing from some commonly used instruments. These types of measures could be used to assess the extent to which program participants are engaging in co-parenting practices and the

quality of those co-parenting relationships. They could also be used to assess how co-parenting behaviors change over time.

The first measure we'll discuss is the parenting alliance inventory. This is developed to measure the part of a couples relationship that is focused on parenthood and child rearing. The full inventory consists of 20 items. Here we present a few sample items from the inventory. To answer each item, parents are asked to think about what happens between them and their child's other parents or the other adults most involved in the care of their child. The response categories are strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree. The sample items we have here include a question of whether my child's other parent enjoys being alone with the child. Another question is during pregnancy, my child's other parent expressed confidence in my ability to be a good parent and when there is a problem with our child, we work out a good solution together.

I've only listed a few items here but the full set of items in the parenting alliance inventory can be found in the evident article that is sited at the end of the presentation. There's references slide where you can access the full site. The second common measure of co-parenting is the parenting convergence scale. This scale consists of six measures and the amount of agreement and disagreement between parents about how to raise their children.

Here we provide a few sample items from the scale and for each of these items, parents report how often each of the statements is true for them. For example, when you and your child's other parent or guardian talk about how to raise the child, how often is the conversation hostile or angry? Another example is when your child complains about his or her other parent or guardian, how often do you agree with him or her? Another example is a question of how often do you and your child's other parent or guardian have

different ideas as to how to raise him or her? The response categories for these types of questions are never, rarely, sometimes, often or always.

The families and child wellbeing study is a study of children born in large urban areas of the United States between 1998 and 2000 and their parents. About 75% of children in this sample were born unmarried parents and these families are considered to be fragile families because they're at greater risk of breaking up and living in poverty than more traditional families. This study collects information from both mothers and fathers and includes items about co-parenting.

The specific dimension is measured in support of co-parenting and sample items include statements like when the father or mother is with the child, he or she acts like the father or mother you want for your child? You can trust the father or mother to take good care of the child? He/she respects the schedules and rules you make for the child? The response categories for these measures are never true, rarely true, sometimes true and always true.

Another survey that includes co-parenting measures is called the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Birth Cohort or the ECLS-B and this is the first study in the United States to track a nationally representative sample of children. Sample consists of about 10,000 children who were born in 2001. Like the fragile family, this survey also collects information from both mothers and fathers and includes a question about shared decision making and a question about co-parenting conflict.

For shared decision making, both parents report when it comes to making major decisions about their child, please tell me if your spouse or partner has no influence, some influence or a great deal of influence on matters such as discipline, nutrition, healthcare and childcare. For co-parenting conflict,

parents report whether they and their spouse often -- or partner -- often, sometimes, hardly ever or never have arguments about their children.

Now that we've reviewed what co-parenting means, we've reviewed how it can be measured and we've seen how it can benefit teen parents and their children, I'd like to turn things over to Brandon who will share with you some information about common co-parenting program approaches.

Brandon Stratford: Okay. So, Mindy has just provided us with a lot of information about how important positive co-parenting is but unfortunately, it can be difficult to begin a co-parenting program, especially one that's tailored for young parents. While there are a number of evidence based programs that focus on relationship, education and parenting skills, there are very few manualized programs that focus specifically on skills relevant to co-parenting and among those programs that do focus on co-parenting, the focus has traditionally been on older couples, particularly those who had previously been married.

While such programs can be helpful, we know that the issues facing young unmarried parents can be very different from those experienced by older couples who have gone through a divorce. While scarce, there are a few manualized programs out there and I'll briefly mentioned three. We recognize that some of you may be implementing programs that either focus on co-parenting or have a co-parenting component that are not listed here. These were chosen merely as examples of what's out there. As Mindy mentioned, you should feel free to let us know in the question and answer box if you're using a different program than one of the three that we've listed here.

I'll start with the Together We Can Program which was developed at Michigan State University. This is actually a relationship education curriculum that includes 24 one hour lessons that are divided into six modules.

Lessons can be offered one on one or in a group study and the target population is unmarried couples. While the curriculum focuses on helping couples make decisions about their families with the focus on the benefits of marriage, the second module has five lessons that introduce the idea of co-parenting and the third module has six lessons that focus on co-parenting skills with an emphasis on communication.

Family Foundations is a program intended for any couple either married or unmarried that is expecting a child. The content focuses on the co-parenting relationship rather than the romantic relationship and is delivered over the course of eight two hour sessions. The curriculum is offered in a group setting and is designed such that four sessions are conducted prior to the birth and another four sessions are delivered after the birth. The developers chose this model in recognition of the fact that the time of the birth is often when both parents are most likely to be motivated to parent together.

The Young Parenthood Program is specifically designed for expectant adolescents and young adults. It's a flexible program that consists of 10 to 14 weekly sessions that generally last 60 minutes. The counselor who facilitates the program works with couples to tailor it to the particular relationship skills that they identify. There is a particular emphasis in later sessions on reducing aggressive parenting and interpersonal interactions. This curriculum is designed to be delivered to individual couples, not in a group setting.

While each of these programs is different, they all share a few characteristics that we'll briefly examine. The primary characteristics that distinguishes these programs from relationship education and parenting education program is the focus on promoting a child focused relationship between two individuals. Generally, these programs target fathers and mothers as the two individuals but as Mindy mentioned, there's no expectation that there's a romantic

relationship between these two individuals. So, it could include a father and mother or a mother and maternal grandmother as Mindy mentioned or even a father and maternal grandparent.

The emphasis is on developing a relationship that allows the two individuals to meet the needs of the child. Their relationship is focused on the child and the things that they might do for one another are in service of meeting the child's needs rather than maintaining a romantic relationship. Co-parenting programs also tend to focus on communication skills. Many co-parenting programs are intended for couples who do not live together so communication is particularly critical. However, it should be noted that even parents who live together can often benefit from improved communication skills.

This can include fostering specific conversations about the goals that they have for their child, delineating tasks, scheduling visits and other things. One example used to illustrate the importance of communication in one of the programs is a child who gets vaccinated twice because each parent has a different preferred pediatrician and they don't communicate with one another when it comes time to ensure that the child is properly vaccinated for school. This example helps to illustrate the points that when parents do not communicate effectively, the child can be harmed inadvertently by the parents' actions.

A third characteristic of these programs is an emphasis on problem solving. Raising a child together often involves compromise. For all parents, compromises must be made in terms of parenting style preferences. For parents who do not live together, compromises must also be made related to custody arrangements. Finding a way to present a united front so that the child feels secure that both parents are not willing to undermine the other is also an important aspect of problem solving. In fact, learning how not to put the child

in the middle or make the child feel like he or she must choose sides is also an important and often difficult aspect of positive co-parenting.

Now that we've reviewed some of the components of co-parenting programs and a few of the barriers to implementing these programs, we'd like to hear from you all about your experiences. So, we'll go ahead and open the poll. If you could please indicate which barrier to implementing co-parenting programs is the most challenging for your program. So, we'll just give a couple of seconds more and then we'll go ahead and close the poll. Okay. So, we'll go ahead and close the poll and it looks like about half of folks indicated that it's difficult to recruit teen fathers and that's the primary challenges in addressing co-parenting relationships and another main reason is the conflict that exists between the parent making it difficult to address co-parenting skills.

So, and I will point out, actually, that the Office of Adolescent Health is also going to have some new products coming out soon that will help programs to consider a little bit more how to get teen fathers involved in programming in general and it looks like here that is one of the main reasons why programs might have some challenges in implementing these co-parenting programs.

So, now that we've had a brief overview of a few programs that are widely available, I'd like to take a couple of minutes to describe the two programs that have been rigorously evaluated. I've included some basic information here on the two co-parenting programs that have been rigorously evaluated, Family Foundations and the Young Parented Program. Both programs have been evaluated using a randomized control file where some parents receive the training and some parents did not with both sets of parents being assessed for things like parenting behaviors, co-parenting behaviors and their general

perceptions of parenting before the program, after the program and then as follow-up assessments.

With the Family Foundations Program, they actually followed up with parents one year after taking the class and then again between three and a half and four years after the class. That's important because many times a program might result in a short-term change but parenting occurs over many years. So, it's important to see that the effects of a program are long lasting. This evaluation found a number of positive outcomes for the parents when comparing those who were randomly selected to participate in the program with those who are not. They reported better co-parenting skills and less frequent use of physical punishment. They also reported feeling more capable as parents and less parenting related stress.

In keeping with some of the basic research findings that Mindy presented, which suggest that co-parenting is important for child well being, the program evaluations found that the children of these parents also had better social skills and fewer behavior problems than the children of parents who did not participate in the program.

Interestingly, it seems that the reduction in behavior problems was primarily seen among boys. I'll talk very briefly about The Young Parenthood Program because we have a guest with us who developed the program and will be able to provide a much better description of the program than I can.

As I mentioned before, this program is specifically intended for adolescent parents. I'd like to point out that the benefits of this program at the 18 month follow-up seem to be particularly promising for young fathers.

In fact, fathers who participated in the program were more likely to be actively engaged with their child at 18 months than fathers who did not participate. Mothers reported increases in relationship skills and fathers reported improved relationships with their parenting partner compared to parents who did not participate in the program.

Interestingly, it seems that the improvements in co-parenting skills appear to be the primary driver of the increase in father engagement. But I think I'll let Dr. Florsheim tell you more about that.

Before I introduce Dr. Florsheim I want to mention that he graciously agreed to answer a few of your questions so feel free to type in a question while he's speaking and we'll try to get to a few of your questions when we've finished the presentation.

So, Dr. Florsheim I'd like to thank you for agreeing to join us today. If you could take a few moments to fill in anything that I might have left out. But also if you could share a little bit about your experiences with how this program is actually run in the field.

Paul Florsheim: Okay. Thank you for inviting me to join the Webinar. It's - I'm looking forward to some engagement with your audience. It's always fun to talk with people who are really trying to do this in the field.

I will briefly - just to sort of stay on track with time I will briefly describe a little bit of the background of how I got into this work and then really focus on kind of the nuts and bolts of the program itself and maybe a little bit about future directions. And then really leave it open for some discussion later on.

So as was indicated by your audience the greatest struggle it sounds like people are having is with engaging the young fathers in their programs. And that is interestingly what I was originally interested was in studying young fathers. And I learned pretty quickly that the best way to find young fathers young - was to recruit pregnant teens.

And I have always throughout my career of studying pregnant teens and their partners, really relied on the pregnant teenager to recruit her partner to come in and participate in whatever it is I was doing. You know, whether it's just straight research or if it's program development research as with The Young Parenthood Program.

Now there are, of course, different modalities for engaging young fathers and young couples. As indicated, The Family Foundations uses a group format and I use a couple based format. So we really focus just on couple by couple.

And I actually really enjoy working with groups but we have found over the years that the logistics of working with young co-parenting couples has - makes it very difficult to get a group of them together. So just based on the populations that I've worked with we've gone to the couple by couple approach.

The goal of the program as has already been mentioned, is not necessarily to keep the couples together. Although that sometimes is their goal - how to work things out as a romantic partner. But it is really to focus on the development of communication skills, the development of interpersonal skills, which we assume to be not quite ready for co-parenting.

We don't expect these young men and women to have the skills to manage the challenges of co-parenting and so the goal of the program really is to kind of

speed up development a little bit and help them acquire these skills so that they can work together as co-parents regardless of what happens to the romantic relationship.

And we're very straight forward about that at the beginning because we don't want them to feel as though we are pressuring them one way or the other to stay together or not.

So I'm going to move - I'm actually not sure where you are in your slides. I'm not connected to them. I'm just using these - the PowerPoint. I'm going to move to this slide where there's kind of an overview of The Parenthood Program in multiple colors. And like most manualized programs, there is some kind of a step-wise sequence to this.

I'm going to go quickly over these six steps and then in the next slide go into a little bit more detail around the third phase which is where the meat of the matter is. So there is a very deliberate focus on the introduction and engagement phase.

One of the things that comes from psychology intervention research, particularly working with adolescents is that those initial sessions, really the first session, is really important in terms of how do you engage young people in any kind of psychological intervention or prevention.

And so we spend a lot of time thinking about how do we introduce the program in a way that won't be aversive and will be attractive. One of the things that we have found is that if you do present this program as a way of helping them communicate regardless of what happens in the relationship and that their relationship with each other is the most important part of their young

child's social environment. That it's really very important to their development.

Most young people get that based on their own experience. They know that their parent's relationship with each other, even if that relationship doesn't exist anymore, is important to who they are and how they feel. So they - that is not a hard sell.

We then move quickly into sort of identifying strengths and goals as well as, folding into that, limitations and problems. What do they want to work on? How can they achieve their goals by working on the development of certain skills?

And then we move into the interpersonal skill development phase which is the meat of the program as I mentioned. And we have kind of a list of different skill sets that we don't try to go through all of them with all couples. What we do is we work with a couple on selecting two or three skill sets that they'd like to focus on based on the nature of their relationship.

And in this way, the program is designed to be tailored somewhat to meet the particular needs of each couple. So a couple, you know, an example of the couple that really has a hard - is high conflict and has a hard time listening to each other and letting each other speak is very different from a couple that - a young couple let's say who really have no idea what to say to each other whatsoever.

So they don't really know each other. They happen to be having a baby together but they - their relationship might be quite underdeveloped. Those two couples are going to require different types of approaches.

The fourth phase is about role transitions and this is where we sort of emphasize the - sort of the identity issues around parenthood and their roles within their peer groups and their family and how that is shifting. And help them sort of think about how their roles are shifting and we open the door for their - to invite their parents to come in and talk.

And help them if they choose this option to help them talk with their parents about how their parents can be supportive of them, talk with their parents about how they could be supportive of them as they make this role transition - sort of asking for support from their parents.

One of the things that's interesting about this phase is that there is sort of this dramatic developmental shift where - which can create tension within the family. But if they rely very much on their parents for support their - the grandparents of the child - but at the same time now that they are becoming parents they often want to be making their own decisions.

And so there's room for friction there. We do a summary in preparation for the child birth. Sort of reviewing what - the strengths that they've gained as a way of kind of consolidating in their own minds their readiness for parenthood and co-parenthood.

And then after the baby is born we do some parenting support in booster sessions. Knowing that what happens - that the kind of work that we do before the baby's born, which is when the bulk of the program is delivered, that that's really put to the test after the baby arrives and they often need an extra boost of support.

I'm going to move to the next slide and describe in a little bit more detail this Phase 3 and The Menu of Interpersonal Skills. And so I'm not going to go

through this one by one. So what I'll do is just kind of talk about these different skills in a couple - focusing on a couple of them.

But in broad strokes we have drawn a lot from the adult marital literature, the divorcing literature, the healthy relationships literature. And integrated that with our understanding of adolescent development and adolescent interventions.

So we've tailored the program to focus on the development of interpersonal skills which you don't normally do with an adolescent couple. But in this case, because they're having a child together, we feel as though drawing on these relationship support skills is important.

So one of the things that some of your audience may recognize is this Reflective Listening Skills which is used an awful lot in marital literature. And we found that it really is very useful for this population as well. Kids like to do this.

And the basic idea behind it is, is that - for those of you who are not familiar with it - is that when they are discussing something that's contentious in some ways or difficult for them to understand where the other person is coming from we ask one person to essentially bite his or her tongue while his - the partner has what they have to say.

And then we the person who's been biting their tongue to repeat back what they heard and then we ask that person to verify whether that in fact is what they said. And it's really a technique to slow the interaction down.

Asking them to listen more carefully, giving them the tools to clarify what it is that they're saying because sometimes they are not able to say it very clearly.

And it facilitates a deeper understanding of where that other person is coming from.

But it's just slowing the process down seems to have tremendous effects on helping them understand each other better and come to some better agreement of whatever conflict they're having. On the other side of thinking - one of the things that Brandon focused on and I think that much of the literature focuses on - that sort of problem solving/communication skills - we also have another set of skills.

Stress management skills/acceptance skills there more sort of along the lines of calming things down rather than working things out. And sometimes trying to work things out with these young couples is not always the best approach.

Again, on a case by case basis, if they're under a great deal of stress and they're quite immature and they don't have the skills to kind of work a problem through, we have found that sometimes the best thing to do is to help them with learning how to sort of tone down the conflict - help each other reduce the stress through some simple stress reduction exercises and really lend each other support.

So we take a different approach depending on what our sense of what the couple needs. That's intended to give you kind of a taste of what it is we do. We are continuing to develop the program.

So one of the things that we're interested in as you - just to follow up on what I was talking about a minute ago is - what is the - what are the active ingredients when we are able to be successful? So we're doing some - planning some research now in order to sort of test these two different

approaches, communication skills/problem solving approaches versus more stress management/support skills approach.

This is something that we're planning. We're not doing it yet. And so - and then playing around with dose a little bit as well. Because the program, which is 10 to 14 sessions, is difficult to administer.

And some of you are probably wondering, how would I ever do this within the context of my setting? And we have found that it can be difficult depending on what your resources are. And so we're working to shorten the program so that it's more easily administered and perhaps more easily accessed by the population. So I'm going to stop there and let you continue or address some questions if there are any now.

Man: Great. Thanks so much for that description. And we will definitely leave time for questions. So I'll just kind of quickly go through the last couple of slides. Basically, these are a couple of slides about some resources that are available or are coming soon that might be helpful in terms of co-parenting programming and also particularly around getting young fathers engaged.

So on this slide you can see a couple of info graphics that the Office of Adolescent Health will be putting out shortly. And they address some of the negative stereotypes about young fathers. And are intended to help programs be able promote a more a more positive image of young fathers.

I think we find that when young fathers feel more respected they're more likely to engage in a program. So this kind of helps to educate the community and kind of let people know that your program is a place that respects young fathers and would provide them with a safe place.

The next slide - our last slide for resources for co-parenting lists a couple of ideas in terms of resources for primarily more of a logistical kind of planning. These come from a number of States that have produced Parenting Plan Tool Kits that are generally designed to help parents come to an agreement about custody and visitation.

So the ones I've listed here also do a pretty good job of including child development information so that parents can kind of better understand how their decisions might affect their child at different ages. They also include a number of worksheets to help parents come to an agreement about visitation and list some pros and cons of various schedules.

So that is our list of resources and again I just went through it quickly because I want to make sure that we have time for questions. So you can see here we've got a list of the documentation of some of the studies that we referenced and all of this will be up on the OAH web site.

So you'll be able to get the full list and go check these resources out for yourself. But at this point we'd like to open up the phone lines for questions and also you should feel free to type in a question in the Q&A box. So if you'd like to ask a question over the phone you can just dial Star 1 and the Operator will take it from there. Otherwise, you can go ahead and type in your question in the question and answer box.

And while we're waiting for folks to get on the phone if they've got questions I was wondering, Dr. Florsheim, if you might talk a little bit more maybe about the logistical challenges that you've heard programs talk about.

And some of - it sounds like some of your future directions are directly related to information you're getting from programs around what the challenges or

difficulties are. But if you could maybe share a little bit more about what you're finding works or what people are doing out there.

Paul Florsheim: Yes. I mean I think that one of the logistical challenges, I mean, as it was already mentioned is getting the young fathers in. And I do think that, you know, resources, you know, matter a lot. And so one of the things that you - to get the young fathers in is to have incentives.

If there are - if there's room for incentives, if fathers - if the mother's bring their partners in, you know, can they get access to baby supplies? And, you know, a lot of prenatal clinics have kind of a reward system for showing up for appointments. And to include participation in that rewards - participation in co-parenting programs and that rewards system, I know that, that can help.

But there are other - food often helps. You know serving - having treats and meals can often help. We - one of the things that we have done is actually pay participants per session to come in. And that, we have found, is fairly effective. So a small amount of money can go a long way in terms of just increasing participation - bus tokens, things like that. Whatever sort of resource type of support can really help with recruitment.

Man: Great.

Jacquelyn McCain: Thanks so much Dr. Florsheim. We have one written question asking about what the best approach is for dealing with power differentials in relationships. For example, if one partner is significantly older than the other.

And we definitely recognize that this can be an issue in dealing with teen and young parents where there's often those age differences and power

differentials in relationships. Dr. Florsheim I don't know if you want to respond to that.

But I can, you know, see that a lot of the content of the examples of the co-parenting program that we looked at today should help to address some of those power differentials just in terms of helping partners with their listening skills, with their communication skills, with their expressive skills, and just sort of trying to empower both partners to have a voice and communicate with each other and respect each other's desires and opinions and voices.

Paul Florsheim: Right. That's - I mean, definitely there's sort of two ways to think about that question. One is, sort of, around the issues of communication and certainly the value of sort of a couples focused approach is that you do, I mean, if there are differences and power differential what the counselor would typically do in that is to try to make sure that they are sort of opening up room for both people to have a voice.

And, you know, one of the things - I mean - raises the question of risk for infant and partner violence. And that's something that we've dealt with which is sort of a complicated other issue - going both ways. I mean, reciprocal - intimate partner violence is often reciprocal but it involves - often involves power differentials.

I don't know that this the - there also a lot of legal issues around power differentials and I don't know if that's where the question is coming from but it's really important to know the local and state laws for reporting around exploitation based on age differentials and the potential for that. And to be clear with your population about what the rules are around reporting.

This is something that we've - I've done research in three different states with this population now. And it's different in each state. And we've had to really work hard in terms of understanding the laws and finding ways to communicate with our couples around issues of reporting when there are age differences.

One of the ways we've got around that is that we've designed - we don't - at this time couples cannot be more than five years apart. So we've restricted the age difference to some extent to address that issue of the potential for - the greater potential for exploitation and coercion between partners.

Jacquelyn McCain: Okay. Thank you for that response and that question. Please we just - we do want encourage other people to submit questions - they could submit written questions or call in over the line.

One question that we had was for Dr. Florsheim, if you can talk a bit more amount the types of youth populations that you have worked with, with The Young Parenthood Program. And sort of talk about the diversity of different populations that you've targeted.

Paul Florsheim: Sure. What we - the ground - the first set of studies that I did were done in Salt Lake City, Utah and Chicago, Illinois - two very different populations. The - in Salt Lake City was originally mostly an Anglo population - Chicago was mostly African American and Latino.

This was just to sort of understand the transition to parenthood. So the groundwork was done in just following young couples across the transition to parenthood and seeing whether their relationship - the quality of their relationship - did in fact matter.

Once we had demonstrated that and developed some ideas about how we could address that relationship, I did a couple of studies where I was in Salt Lake City, Utah - the University of Utah. And we worked with a population that was mostly Latino and Anglo - White. And there, you know, there we found fewer - I mean we certainly had differences in the delivery of the program.

So the program was bilingual and we addressed cultural issues. And there were often cultural issues between the partners. But we found fewer differences between the Whites and the Latinos than we expected actually in terms of the quality of their relationship or, you know, sort of how those relationships panned out over time or the effect of the program for that matter.

One - since coming to Milwaukee, Wisconsin we've done a pilot study first adapting the program for the Milwaukee context, which, for those of you who don't know, Milwaukee's a very different population than Salt Lake City. It's quite impoverished.

The - it's more African American and Latino - very few White pregnant teenagers in the samples that we recruited from - the populations that we recruited from. And so, different sets of challenges. Salt Lakes City - one of the things, the distinctions - Salt Lake City is - has been identified as a city where there is a still upward mobility in the younger population.

And Milwaukee is - has been identified as a city where the - where there are some of the greatest disadvantaged - the economic disadvantaged. So that has had an impact on our ability to just administer the program and I want to acknowledge that. That we've - we have had more difficulty recruiting and retaining couples in the Milwaukee context than we did in Salt Lake City and I attribute that largely to the effects of poverty.

Jacquelyn McCain: Okay. I think - that's very helpful to know. And just to think about some of the extra challenges implementing these kinds of programs with the kind of range of populations that the staff grantees are targeting. So thank you for that.

Man: And I'll just add - some of the information that we'll be sharing with the upcoming products through The Office of Adolescent Health also talk about the importance of being able to link young fathers to resources that are not necessarily specific to their role as a parent are often helpful both in getting young fathers to participate and also in keeping them engaged.

In terms of employment services and other sorts of resources that they feel are important for their own kind of lives and advancement can often help those young fathers to engage better in other sorts of programming as well. So that's something for programs to consider is at least linking to other programs that can provide those services if your program can't.

But making sure that you have really clear relationships with those other partner organizations, so you know that if you send someone there they will be able to get services. Because you don't want these young fathers to feel like you're kind of sending them on a goose chase if your program can't provide those services itself.

Paul Florsheim: And we - let me just add to that. I mean, we've tried this in a couple different versions. I mean - and we continue to experiment with it. But one of the things that we added in one of the studies was a - what we call care coordination component to this or case management. And that was to address exactly what you said. And it really was appreciated by the fathers.

Most fathers when you ask them what they want they want help with finding jobs. And while that's a difficult thing for most agencies to do, they can - providing that linkage and having it - making sure that it's a good linkage is very - well appreciated and valuable.

I want to mention, I mean, I did - if anybody is interest in the manual, it is available. We just published the manual and so that it is something that you can find through Amazon or whatever, you know, just by Google searching it.

Man: Great. And again, for those of you who are listening who are maybe using other programs as well, if you want to let us know we're actually running out of time here so we want to be respectful of everybody's time.

We've put up the Evaluation Slide - if you could make sure to follow that link before you leave the Webinar so that we can get your feedback we would really appreciate that. And again, thank you to Dr. Florsheim for taking the time to participate here and share some kind of on the ground information about programs that are out there and we really appreciate your taking that time.

Jacquelyn McCain: Yes. Thank you.

Paul Florsheim: Thank you.

Jacquelyn McCain: Dr. Paul, I want to give one more opportunity if there's on the line who would like to ask a question before we sign off. We are very short on time. (Millicent) if you could one time give us a quick prompt please.

Coordinator: Absolutely. At this time if you would like to ask a question please dial Star 1 on your touch tone phone, ensure that your line is not muted. And please

record your first and last name clearly when prompted so that I may introduce your question.

If for any reason you need to withdraw a question you may dial Star 2. Once again - that is Star 1 to ask a question - Star 2 to withdraw a question. One moment please while our first question arrives.

Jacquelyn McCain: Thanks. And while we're waiting for that also if you would like to get quick access to the slide presentation or PowerPoint, if you look up at the top of your screen on the right hand side there's an icon with three little pages - three little pieces of paper - you click on that it'll provide a link that you can quickly download today's slide presentation. Okay, maybe we've got some questions on the line.

Coordinator: At this time, there have been no questions received in the queue.

Jacqueline McCain: Okay. Okay. Well thank you everybody. On behalf of Child Trends and our guest speaker Paul Florsheim and the Office of Adolescent Health, I thank you for your attention. Please do the survey so that we can better our future Webinars. And if you have any questions or concerns as always, please contact your project officer. With that, we will say good afternoon.

Coordinator: This now concludes today's conference. All lines may disconnect at this time. Speakers please hold for your post conference.

Jacquelyn McCain: Thanks.

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