



Knowledge Development on Non-Resident Fathers Involved in the Child Welfare System: A National Initiative

The Children's Bureau funded the American Humane Association and its partners the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law and National Fatherhood Initiative to create a Quality Improvement Center on Non-resident Fathers. The focus for the project came as a result of the Federal Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) and the "What About the Dads?" report. Both the CFSRs on state child welfare systems and the "What About the Dads?" report indicate there is very little meaningful engagement occurring between the child welfare system and fathers. Using this information as a foundation, the QIC-NRF was designed to promote additional knowledge development regarding the engagement of non-resident fathers and their children who are involved in the child welfare system.

The purpose of this project is to determine, through a research design, the impact of non-resident father involvement on child welfare outcomes. Child welfare outcomes include child safety, permanence, and well-being. Included in this design is the examination of the relationship between child and non-resident father and/or paternal relatives. Throughout the five years of this project, information gained from the QIC-NRF will be disseminated to the Children's Bureau, sub-grantees, child welfare agencies, private service providers, the courts and legal systems, and other stakeholders.

Project Approach

The QIC-NRF has a two phase approach. Phase one focus is the identification of sub-themes, knowledge gaps, service gaps, research priorities, and experimental design. Phase two focus is the implementation of the research design in six to eight sites located nationally, and the development of a dissemination process that will provide the most current and state of the art information to practitioners, policy makers, administrators, and researchers. Using a collaborative approach, the QIC-NRF will serve as a laboratory for innovation, application, and learning.

A national advisory board will guide the project team and the Children's Bureau along the process of research focus selection, discernment of key outcomes and key barriers to father engagement with the child welfare systems, and identification of practice that best demonstrates effective ways for the child welfare systems to engage fathers and paternal relatives.

The QIC-NRF goals are:

- To promote and support a research based and outcome focused approach to inform best practices related to the engagement of non-resident fathers and paternal family in the public child welfare system.
- To promote and support a research based and outcome focused approach to determine the impact of father involvement on child safety, permanence, and well-being outcomes.
- To facilitate a collaborative information sharing and problem solving national network among sub-grantees, the Children's Bureau, public child welfare agencies, private service providers, the courts and legal systems, and other stakeholders.

The QIC-NRF core components are divided into two phases.

Phase I

- **Conducting a national needs assessment (year 1):** A multi-faceted, interactive needs assessment will be undertaken to identify the current state of non-resident father involvement in the child welfare system. The barriers and challenges to positive father involvement will be researched from three perspectives; social work/child welfare, legal/courts, and current private provider program practice. A comprehensive literature review, a web-based resource board, a state child and family service review program improvement plan search, key informant interviews, focus groups, and informational summits will inform the selection of the topical focus areas for the research and demonstration projects administered in Phase II of the project.

Phase II

- **Administering grants (years 2-5):** A small number of demonstration projects will be funded through a competitive process to ultimately answer the question, “How is overall child safety, permanence, and well-being impacted as a result of increased father involvement?” The QIC-NRF will provide ongoing technical assistance to funded projects and will facilitate the development of an information sharing network among projects.
- **Evaluating process and outcomes (years 2-5):** A cross-site evaluation involving both descriptive and outcome analyses will be conducted to assess the outcomes achieved by the initiative and synthesize findings across the individual projects. Lessons learned through the implementation process will be documented. Additionally, the QIC-NRF will provide technical assistance to support evaluations undertaken individually by the grantees.
- **Dissemination of knowledge (years 2-5):** To help build a knowledge development process and engage the field, information will be shared in a timely manner throughout all stages of the initiative. Initial information will include an executive summary of the literature review, key informant interviews, focus groups, and informational summits. Initial findings from funded projects on their implementation process, strengths, and challenges will also be disseminated. Finally, information on outcomes achieved through the cross-site evaluation will be shared nationally and project-specific outcomes will be synthesized and disseminated as they become available.

For more information on the project, please contact:

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