



ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
OFFICE OF PLANNING, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Family Strengthening Research: FY2014

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Administration for Children and Families



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for Federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals and communities. ACF aims to foster health and well-being by providing federal leadership, partnership, and resources for the compassionate and effective delivery of human services. The 2014 ACF strategic priorities include:

- Promote economic, health, and social well-being for individuals, families and communities;
- Promote healthy development and school readiness for children, especially for those in low-income families and other special populations;
- Promote safety and well-being of children, youth, and families;
- Support underserved and underrepresented populations; and
- Upgrade the capacity of the Administration for Children and Families to make a difference for families and communities.

Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation



<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre>

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The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) in ACF serves as principal advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Children and Families on increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of programs designed to improve the economic and social well-being of children and families. In collaboration with ACF program offices and others, OPRE is responsible for ACF performance management, conducting research and policy analyses and developing and overseeing research and evaluation projects to assess program performance and inform policy and practice. OPRE also provides guidance, analysis, technical assistance and oversight to ACF programs on strategic planning; performance measurement; research and evaluation methods; statistical, policy and program analysis and synthesis and dissemination of research and demonstration findings.

A central focus of OPRE's research and evaluation is developing reliable knowledge of the effectiveness of different programmatic strategies in order to inform programmatic and policy choices, with a particular focus on testing innovative approaches used by States, Tribes, communities and service organizations in major program areas, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Head Start, child care and child welfare. Moving more families from welfare to work, persistence and progression in employment, marriage and family formation and the well-being and development of children are major focal areas. OPRE includes the Division of Economic Independence, the Division of Child and Family Development and the Division of Family Strengthening. A cross-cutting Performance Management Team leads ACF-wide efforts to plan, monitor and improve program performance.

OPRE's research and evaluation projects are conducted primarily through grants and contracts, and include collaboration with ACF program offices; HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE); other Federal entities and State, Tribal and community partners.

Family Strengthening Research and Evaluation

OPRE's Division of Family Strengthening (DFS) has primary responsibility for research and evaluation related to strengthening relationships within families, supporting fatherhood, nurturing children through their families, reducing teen pregnancy and supporting youth in their transition to adulthood.

OPRE's research in the area of family strengthening includes mothers, fathers, couples, families, children, and youth.

Within these areas, OPRE funds experimental impact evaluations, process evaluations, and descriptive and theory-building research projects aimed at informing the design and implementation of programs; and measure development to improve our ability to capture outcomes. OPRE also invests in building capacity in the research and evaluation field to answer policy-relevant questions.

DFS works in close partnership with a number of other offices, such as

- In ACF:
 - the Office of Family Assistance;
 - the Family and Youth Services Bureau;
 - the Office of Data Analysis, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children, Youth and Families;
 - the Administration on Native Americans;
 - the Children's Bureau;
 - the Office of Child Support Enforcement; and
 - the Office of Head Start,
- In HHS:
 - the Maternal and Child Health Bureau in the Health Resources and Services Administration;
 - the Innovation Center at the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services; and
 - the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

DFS also invests in activities to disseminate rigorous research on family strengthening topics to a diverse range of stakeholders including federal and state policy-makers, program administrators, researchers, and intermediary organizations. DFS has particular strengths in areas related to building evaluation capacity and to strengthening research and evaluation for American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

The following pages describe major OPRE/DFS projects related to family strengthening in Fiscal Year 2014.

Supporting Fatherhood

In recent decades efforts to support and promote responsible fatherhood have been spurred by research that shows a link between supportive fathering and positive child outcomes. Responsible fatherhood programs aim to provide resources and supports to men around healthy relationships, parenting, and economic stability. Much of the past research in the area of fatherhood has focused on middle-income fathers or divorced fathers. The field of research on responsible fatherhood with low-income men is growing. Though the field can draw from some of the past research, the unique circumstances of low-income men, particularly non-resident low-income fathers, necessitate a distinct line of inquiry.

In addition to the projects highlighted below, projects described in the healthy relationships section below also include work on fathers, specifically:

- Parents and Children Together Evaluation,
- Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Curricula Review,
- Fatherhood and Marriage Local Evaluation (FaMLE) and Cross-Site Project, and
- Family Strengthening Secondary Data Analysis Grants.

NEW

Building Bridges and Bonds

Building Bridges and Bonds (B3) is a rigorous evaluation study of responsible fatherhood programs designed to answer multiple practice-relevant research questions. The first year of the contract is a planning period that will involve gathering input from fatherhood experts on the highest priority questions in the field and developing the research design. Potential directions include rigorously testing implementation features such as recruitment and retention, sequencing of services, building coalitions with community partners, testing the efficacy of innovative program components, etc. Six fatherhood programs will be involved in impact and process studies. All impact tests will be conducted through random assignment. The contract was awarded to MDRC, in collaboration with MEF Associates and Abt SRBI.

The Fatherhood Research and Practice Network

The Fatherhood Research and Practice Network is a cooperative agreement awarded to Temple University. The Network will pursue three goals: 1) plan, initiate, and carry out a research agenda to build an evidence base for effective responsible fatherhood interventions and the development of appropriate measures; 2) develop capacity within the evaluator and practitioner communities to conduct and participate in high-quality evaluation studies; and 3) disseminate findings and best practices. The Network will primarily focus on economically disadvantaged and other under-studied populations of fathers and families.

www.frpn.org

Ex-Prisoner Reentry Strategies Study

The Ex-Prisoner Reentry Strategies Study, being conducted by The Urban Institute, will document the implementation of selected reentry programs initially funded in FY 2011 under the Responsible Fatherhood grant program, the experiences of staff and participants, and lessons useful to others in the field. Additional work will involve evaluation design recommendations and a focus on measures appropriate for use in evaluations of programs with similar goals and objectives as these grant programs.

Home Visiting: Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers' Experiences

The Home Visiting: Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers' Experiences Study is a qualitative project that will collect information about innovative approaches used by existing home visiting programs to actively engage and serve fathers, and gather fathers' perspectives on participating in such programs. The study will involve interviews with program staff, home visitors, fathers, and mothers to document (1) program operators' successes and challenges around engaging fathers, (2) the views and opinions of fathers who have been invited to and/or participated in home visiting programs, and (3) lessons for other programs interested in more fully engaging men in their programs. The project is being conducted by the Urban Institute.

Linking Low-Income Men to Medicaid and the Health Insurance Marketplace

This project, jointly funded by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) and OPRE, will provide states with early guidance and long-term strategies on how to enroll low-income men in Medicaid and the Health Insurance Marketplace. The project will focus on: (1) understanding the characteristics of newly eligible low-income men and their barriers for accessing and utilizing health insurance and services; (2) identifying promising outreach, enrollment, and messaging strategies for low-income men from both existing health and human service programs serving low-income men and emerging efforts under the Affordable Care Act; and (3) determining the feasibility of child support, responsible fatherhood, and other ACF programs as vehicles for enrollment. This project is being conducted by RTI International.

Strengthening Relationships

A large body of research has shown that, on average, children raised in stable, two-parent families have better outcomes on a range of measures, even into adulthood. Research has identified dimensions of couples' relationship functioning (e.g., positive communication, effective conflict management, problem solving, etc.) that could be modified or enhanced through relationship-focused educational programming. Evaluations have found that such services can produce significant improvement in multiple dimensions of relationship quality and reductions in break-up/divorce. While past research has focused primarily on middle-class, white couples who were engaged or married, since the mid-1990s ACF has supported healthy marriage and relationship education for a more diverse population.

DFS oversees a research and evaluation agenda to provide needed information about the implementation and effectiveness of such services. The agenda includes a focus on learning the views and experiences of participants as well as other key research questions. Below are descriptions of some of the completed and ongoing studies in this portfolio.

In addition to the projects highlighted below, work in the intimate partner violence section and supporting fatherhood sections also include work related to strengthening relationships, specifically:

- Building Bridges and Bonds, and
- Responding to Intimate Violence in Relationship Programs.

Parents and Children Together

Since 2006, Congress has provided funding for grants to provide healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood services to help interested couples and fathers enhance or improve adult and parent-child relationships and meet other objectives to learn about the implementation and effects of these programs, ACF awarded a contract in 2011 to Mathematica Policy Research to conduct the Parents and Children Together (PACT) evaluation. The evaluation has multiple components: separate impact and process studies for responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage programs and two sub-studies.

Impact/Process Studies

Six grantees are involved in rigorous impact and process studies.

There are four responsible fatherhood grantees:

- Connections to Success (Kansas City MO)
- Fathers' Support Center (St. Louis MO)
- Goodwill/Easter Seals Minnesota (Minneapolis/St. Paul MN)
- Urban Ventures (Minneapolis MN)
- There are two healthy marriage grantees:
 - El Paso Center for Children (El Paso TX)
 - University Behavioral Associates (Bronx NY)

Sub-studies

The two PACT sub-studies involve (1) a series of three annual in-depth, in-person interviews with selected fathers participating in the responsible fatherhood study programs; and (2) a study of the program strategies and adaptations used by selected responsible fatherhood programs serving Hispanic fathers.

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education – Models and Measures

The purpose of the Healthy Marriage/Relationship Education: Models and Measures project, awarded to Child Trends, is to bring together experts in the field to develop recommendations for “next-generation” marriage/relationship education models for diverse populations. The new models will build on previous implementation and impact evaluation evidence, the experience and views of program operators, and other key sources of information. The project will also involve refining existing measures and measurement methods related to healthy marriage/relationship education, as well as developing and validating alternative measures that better reflect the relationships of diverse couples and the interventions in which they participate.

Fatherhood and Marriage Local Evaluation and Cross-Site Project

The purpose of the Fatherhood and Marriage Local Evaluation and Cross-Site Project is to support high quality data collection, strengthen local evaluations, and conduct cross-site analysis for Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage grantees. The project will answer three main research questions: (1) What strategies did grantees use to design well-conceived programs? (2) What strategies did grantees use to successfully implement well-conceived programs? (3) What were the reported outcomes for participants in the programs? In the process of answering these questions, the project will support ACF and Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage grantees by compiling evaluation resources, reviewing implementation plans, and reviewing local evaluation plans. In addition, it will support the grantees in their research endeavors by promoting rigorous research design and high-quality data collection, and assisting in dissemination

of results. Taken together, these activities will further ACF’s understanding the design, implementation, and outcomes of Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage programs. The project is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research.

NEW

Secondary Analyses of Strengthening Families Datasets

OPRE awarded eight cooperative agreements to fund research to conduct secondary data analysis of archived ACF data, specifically the Building Strong Families (BSF), Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM), and Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI) datasets. The grantees are covering topics such as the economic benefits of marriage and relationship education (MRE) programs, child outcomes related to MRE, race/ethnic differences in marriage health and stability, and the experiences of fathers in MRE. Grantees will work collaboratively with their fellow grantees to move the field of research focused on strengthening families forward through the design of complimentary analyses and joint dissemination efforts.

NEW

Family Strengthening Scholar Grants

The Family Strengthening Scholars grant program is designed to build research capacity in the healthy marriage/responsible fatherhood field (HM/RF). These grants are to support dissertation research on HM/RF policy issues and are meant to build capacity in the research field to focus research on questions that have direct implications for HM/RF decision-making and program administration. They are intended to focus particularly on underserved/understudied populations, such as low-income families and minority population, utilize rigorous methodology and help inform the development of future intervention research.

Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Curricula Review

This contract developed a searchable tool that allows grant applicants and others interested in information about commonly used healthy marriage and relationship education and responsible fatherhood curriculum to search for topical content, target populations, implementation parameters, and linkages with relevant research. The website is intended to help organizations to align curriculum selection with programmatic goals, organizational infrastructure and capacity, and target populations and to serve as a resource guide for individuals working in the healthy marriage/responsible fatherhood arena. This website provides information about the content of curricula commonly used by the Office of Family Assistance Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grantees, as well as implementation factors needed to implement a particular curriculum. This website can be used to search for curriculum features of interest, such as cost or target populations. Users can also create a side-by-side comparison table of curricula of interest. The project was executed by Impaq International.

National Survey of Family Growth

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) is a survey of U.S. men and women of reproductive age conducted periodically by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey provides national estimates concerning factors related to fertility, family planning, marriage, divorce, and parenthood, including fatherhood. NCHS has conducted cycles of the NSFG since 1973. OPRE contributes funds to the NSFG to support data collection and analyses.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Two-Parent Families Study

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Two Parent Families Study is a descriptive study that will collect information about two parent families who receive or are eligible to receive TANF. This study will document: (1) the characteristics of two-parent families participating in or eligible for TANF; (2) the variety of services TANF two parent families are receiving through TANF; (3) how state policies help or hinder families' participation in TANF; and (4) how beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of staff and eligible families help or hinder families' participation in TANF. This project is being conducted by the Urban Institute.

Building Strong Families

The Building Strong Families (BSF) study, led by Mathematica, is a multi-site impact and implementation evaluation of healthy marriage and relationship education and support services offered to unwed parents at or near the birth of their child. The study documented the interim (15-months) and long-term (36-month) impacts of the services, how the program services were implemented, and participants' experiences.

Data Availability

After being stripped of all identifying information, data sets from BSF have been made available to the larger research and policy community for secondary analysis. All data from the baseline, program participation (from sites' Management Information Systems), 15-mo follow-up, and 36-mo follow-up have been archived at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/>).

Supporting Healthy Marriage

The Supporting Healthy Marriage study, led by MDRC, is an impact and implementation evaluation of healthy marriage education and related services for lower-income married couples with children provided by eight programs across the country. The study documented the interim (12-months) and long-term (30-month) impacts of the services, how the program services were implemented and participants' experiences.

Data Availability

After being stripped of all identifying information, data sets from SHM have been made available to the larger research and policy community for secondary analysis. All data from the baseline, Management Information System, 12-mo follow-up survey, observational study, child assessment, and 30-mo adult and youth follow-up survey have been archived at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (see: <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/34420>).

Community Healthy Marriage Initiative

The Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives (CHMI) Evaluation, led by RTI, includes: (1) implementation evaluations of family strengthening demonstrations authorized by the Office of Child Support Enforcement and (2) an implementation and impact evaluation of multi-component healthy marriage and relationship education services in selected communities.

Data Availability

After being stripped of all identifying information, data sets from CHMI have been made available to the larger research and policy community for secondary analysis. All data from the Round 1 and Round 2 surveys have been archived at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (see: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR34719.v1>).

CAPACITY BUILDING

Throughout its research and evaluation portfolio, OPRE has a strong focus on building capacity of the field. This includes supporting new scholars to conduct applied, policy relevant research as well as building the capacity of the policy and practice community to understand research and evaluation. Below are some highlights from these kinds of activities.

The Design Options for Home Visiting Evaluation (DOHVE) project provides technical assistance to Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grantees around research and evaluation, performance management, data systems and continuous quality improvement. The project provides universal support through briefs and webinars and individualized support to grantees in states and territories. The Tribal Evaluation Institute (TEI) is the sister project to DOHVE that provides similar support to Tribal MIECHV grantees. TEI is noteworthy for its focus on community based research and evaluation, focus on culturally appropriate data collection and emphasis on the ethical dissemination and translation of evaluation findings with AIAN families to external audiences. The Fatherhood and Marriage Local Evaluation and Cross Site project will be providing similar support to grantees in their performance management and research work by providing universal and individualized technical assistance on rigorous research design, high quality data collection and dissemination of results.

Both the Responsible Fatherhood Research Network and the Center for Research on Hispanic Children and Families have as one of their primary goals to develop capacity within the research, evaluation and practitioner communities to conduct and participate in high quality evaluation studies. This goal may be accomplished through post doctoral or research fellowship opportunities or supporting new investigator work.

The Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC) has as one of its goals to build capacity for researchers to work in partnership with tribal communities to engage in research. However, the project team discovered that program administrators in tribal early childhood programs wanted to better understand research and evaluation. In response to this need, the first TRC Summer Institute was held at Johns Hopkins University. The two credit graduate level course was entitled “Early Childhood Research with Tribal Communities.” Over 40 students registered for the week long course taught by TRC faculty and partners. The course received strong reviews, and will be repeated again in July 2014.

The Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE) project presented a pre conference session at the annual meeting of the Association for Maternal and Child Health Providers on using evidence in decision making. HomVEE is also developing briefs on methods critical to the conduct of evaluations that meet the HHS standards for evidence of effectiveness in home visiting.

Nurturing Children Through Families

Home visiting is a service delivery strategy. In the work described below, home visiting is used to provide services to pregnant women and families with children up to age five. Early childhood home visiting programs may affect a range of outcomes including maternal health, child health and development, child maltreatment prevention, and family economic self-sufficiency. The federal investment in home visiting—and related research and evaluation—has greatly expanded through the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, established under the Affordable Care Act.

In addition to the projects highlighted below, a few projects described in other sections may be of interest because of their focus on or inclusion of home visiting programs:

- the Home Visiting – Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers’ Experiences project (described in the Responsible Fatherhood section above) which seeks to describe innovative program practices around engaging fathers and fathers’ experiences with home visiting;
- the Building Strong Families evaluation (described above in the Healthy Relationships section) includes four sites that combined a home visiting program (Healthy Families America) with family strengthening services; and
- the Personal Responsibility Education Program evaluation (described in the Teen Pregnancy Prevention section below) is combining a home visiting program (Healthy Families America) with programming to avoid rapid repeat pregnancy.

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE)

The Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE) is the national evaluation of the MIECHV program. It includes 12 states, 88 local sites, and approximately 5,100 families. Families are randomly assigned to receive one of four home visiting programs or referrals to other community resources. The study will look at the effectiveness of MIECHV overall, for certain population groups, by model and features of programs. It will also include an economic analysis. The first report is due in 2015 and impacts will be available in 2018. The project is being carried out by MDRC.

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation – Strong Start

The Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation-Strong Start (MIHOPE-Strong Start) will evaluate the effectiveness of two evidence-based home visiting models to improve birth and health outcomes for expectant families enrolled in Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The two models that will be studied in MIHOPE-Strong Start are Healthy Families America (HFA) and Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP), both of which have shown some evidence of improving birth outcomes in prior research. The evaluation is part of the Centers’ for Medicare and Medicaid Services’ (CMS) Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation’s Strong Start for Mothers and Newborns initiative.

MIHOPE-Strong Start is closely integrated with MIHOPE, a study of four evidence-based home visiting models funded by the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.

MIHOPE-Strong Start will include programs funded by MIECHV as well as those with other funding sources. The contract to conduct the evaluation was awarded to MDRC with subcontracts to James Bell Associates, Johns Hopkins University, Mathematica Policy Research, and New York University. This project is being led by the Administration for Children and Families in collaboration with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Health Resources and Services Administration.

NEW

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation – Check In

The purpose of the MIHOPE Check-In project is to annually update contact information for families who participated in the Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE). MIHOPE is examining child and family outcomes for participants in the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program when the child is 15 months old. Previous research on home visiting programs has also found impacts on child and family outcomes when the children are even older (i.e., preschool age, school age, teenagers, etc.). To ensure that it is possible to examine the long-term impacts of the MIECHV program with future follow-up studies, up-to-date contact information must be maintained for study participants. In addition to maintaining current contact information for MIHOPE participants, the MIHOPE Check-In project may also administer a brief survey to gather information on a small set of family and child outcomes, and may collect consent forms to allow for future analysis of administrative data.

Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness

In 2010 as part of implementing the MIECHV legislation, DHHS set criteria for determining which home visiting program models have evidence of effectiveness. The Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE) project is an annual, systematic review of evidence of effectiveness, the results of which determine which models meet the DHHS criteria. To date 14 of 35 models reviewed have been found to meet the DHHS criteria. In addition, HomVEE reviews the evidence for home visiting programs in tribal communities and implementation lessons learned. The project is being carried out by Mathematica Policy Research.

Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

The Tribal Early Childhood Research Center (TRC) provides leadership and support to promote excellence in community-based participatory research and evaluation of Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), Head Start, and Early Head Start (EHS) initiatives that serve American Indian and Alaskan Native (AIAN) children and families. Goals of TRC are as follows:

1. Engage in a participatory process of consultation with key stakeholders and collaboration with tribal Head Start / Early Head Start (HS/EHS) and Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs to foster a community of learning;
2. Support and conduct research and measurement development;
3. Enhance program evaluation and research-to-practice activities;
4. Disseminate the findings of the proposed center broadly; and
5. Train the next generation of evaluators and researchers to work effectively

with HS/EHS, MIECHV and other early childhood programs in AI/AN communities.

The grant award was made to the University of Colorado Denver. The project builds upon existing partnerships between the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health, tribal communities, and researchers nationwide. The award period is from September 2011 to September 2016. Links to TRC activities and the resources they have developed can be found at www.tribalearlychildhood.org and <http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/research/centers/CAIANH/trc/Pages/TRC.aspx>.

Design Options for Home Visiting Evaluation

The Design Options for Home Visiting Evaluation (DOHVE) project supports the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program and includes two key components: (1) the development of design options for conducting a national evaluation of programs funded through the MIECHV Program (now completed); and (2) the provision of technical assistance (TA) to MIECHV grantees on (a) research and evaluation, (b) benchmarks, (c) data systems, and (d) continuous quality improvement.

The DOHVE contract was awarded to MDRC and its subcontractors James Bell Associates, Cincinnati Children's Hospital, and a number of academic consultants. DOHVE is led by ACF in collaboration with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

A few selected DOHVE products are included below. To access all DOHVE TA resources, see <http://www.mdrc.org/dohve-project-resources>.

Tribal Home Visiting Evaluation Institute

The Tribal Home Visiting Evaluation Institute (TEI) contract will provide technical assistance, leadership, and support to promote excellence in community-based research and evaluation of Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) initiatives that serve American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families through the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program. Example focal areas of technical assistance to grantees include: developing and implementing a rigorous evaluation of home visiting; selecting, adapting, and developing culturally appropriate data collection tools and measures; tracking and measuring benchmarks; developing and modifying existing data systems; continuous quality improvement; data protection and privacy; and ethical dissemination and translation of evaluation findings derived from research with AI/AN to external audiences. The staffing of the TEI reflects an understanding and sensitivity to issues of conducting an evaluation in a tribal setting, and includes researchers who have a history of working with AI/AN communities on the evaluation of home visiting. The award was made to MDRC, James Bell Associates, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Colorado Denver.

SPOTLIGHT ON FAMILY STRENGTHENING RESEARCH FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVES

Across OPRE, there is a growing portfolio of research on ACF programs and their effectiveness in serving American Indians and Alaska Natives. From Head Start and Home Visitation to Child Welfare and TANF, OPRE's research reflects ACF's commitment to developing and undertaking research in a manner that reflects the strengths, needs and cultural identities of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Currently, the Division of Family Strengthening has four major ongoing research efforts specifically focused on the self sufficiency needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Tribal Early Childhood Research

Center seeks to address gaps in early childhood research with American Indian and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) through partnerships with tribal Head Start, Early Head Start, child care, and home visiting programs. The goals of the TRC are to engage in a participatory research process and help researchers to work effectively with early childhood programs in AI/AN communities.

HomVEE Tribal Report In June 2010, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Child Care, in partnership with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), announced the availability of funds and requested applications for the FY 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Grant Program. The legislation set aside 3 percent of the total Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood

Home Visiting Program appropriation (authorized in Section 511(j)) for grants to federally recognized tribes (or a consortia of tribes), tribal organizations, or urban Indian organizations and required that the tribal grants, to the greatest extent practicable, be consistent with the requirements of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program grants to states and territories (authorized in Section 511(c)).

The overall goals of the ACA Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program grants to states and territories are to strengthen and improve maternal and child health programs; improve service coordination for at risk communities; and identify and provide comprehensive home visiting services to families who reside in at risk communities. The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program will enable states to utilize what is known about effective home visiting services to provide evidence based program models that promote outcomes such as improvements in maternal and prenatal health, infant health, and child health and development; reduced child maltreatment; improved parenting practices related to child development outcomes; improved school readiness; improved family socioeconomic status; improved coordination of referrals to community resources and supports; and reduced incidence of injuries, crime, and domestic violence. The ACA Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program mirrors the

state program to the maximum extent practicable, with the goal of supporting the development of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) children and families through a coordinated, high quality, evidence based home visiting strategy. The tribal program is designed to support the implementation of high quality, culturally relevant home visiting programs using models that have demonstrated evidence of effectiveness.

Tribal Home Visiting Evaluation

Institute provides technical assistance, leadership, and support to promote excellence in community based research and evaluation of the federal home visiting program, Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) initiatives that serve AI/AN children and families through the Tribal MIECHV program. Examples of focal areas include developing and implementing a rigorous evaluation of home visiting; selecting, adapting, and developing culturally appropriate data collection tools and measures; tracking and measuring benchmarks; developing and modifying existing data systems; continuous quality improvement; data protection and privacy; and ethical dissemination and translation of evaluation findings derived from research with AIAN to external audiences.

Understanding Urban Indians' Interactions with ACF Programs and Services Project

The purpose of this project is to implement an exploratory research study to better understand the challenges and context for family self sufficiency of low income Alaska Natives and American Indians living in urban areas and their interactions with services and programs offered by ACF. The project will design and then execute a research study to yield an understanding of how poverty and other socio economic conditions impact the urban Indian family, and how access to ACF services and programs plays a role. It is anticipated that the research study will employ a range of research activities and methods, including field work. A Technical Working Group will be convened to assist in identifying research priorities for the study.

The study will collect information that will advance the field of knowledge about urban Indians and be useful to ACF in better understanding and meeting the needs of the urban Indian population. The ACF Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) is overseeing the project, in collaboration with the ACF Administration for Native Americans (ANA).

Supporting Positive Youth Development And Reducing Teen Pregnancy

Many ACF programs serve youth. Some directly target youth, such as the Personal Responsibility Education Program (which educates young people on both abstinence and contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS) or the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program. In some cases youth are participants in broader ACF programs. The Division of Family Strengthening has a number of projects with a sole or large focus on youth. In addition to the projects below, it is anticipated the MIHOPE and MIHOPE-SS projects will include a significant proportion of young mothers in their study samples.

Outside of the work conducted under the Division of Family Strengthening, the work in OPRE's Division of Economic Independence focused on employment and training and work in OPRE's Division of Child and Family Development on youth in foster care may also be of interest.

Evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Education Program

The Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) is one of multiple efforts at the Federal level to reduce teen pregnancy through the use of evidence-based programs. The goals of the PREP Evaluation are to document how programs funded through the State PREP program are implemented in the field and to assess selected PREP-funded programs' effectiveness. The study, being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, will (1) describe how States have designed and implemented PREP programs, (2) collect and analyze performance measurement data, and (3) conduct random assignment impact evaluations and in-depth implementation evaluations of up to five specific PREP-funded sites. More information on the PREP Evaluation is available at: <http://www.prepeval.com/>.

Gauging the Effectiveness of the Transitional Living Program

This evaluation will measure the impacts of the Transitional Living Program on runaway and homeless youth. The Transitional Living Program (TLP) provides supervised shelter and services to homeless youth – ages 16-21 – for up to 18 months. The shelter can take several forms, including group homes, host family homes, and supervised apartments. In addition, the program provides an array of services, such as basic life skills, parenting skills, educational advancement, job attainment skills, and mental and physical health care. Participants also are referred to services available from mainstream systems. The evaluation’s basic research question is: “How well do young people served by TLP fare after they leave the program, compared with youth who do not have access to the program?” Specifically, the study is examining outcomes for housing stability and homelessness, employment, educational attainment, development of positive attitudes and relationships, and engagement in risky behaviors. The study will also provide an in-depth exploration of how TLPs serve homeless youth. The program is administered by and the evaluation is being funded through the Family and Youth Services Bureau in the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. The evaluation is overseen by the Office of Data Analysis, Research, and Evaluation within the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families. OPRE is contributing funding and collaborating with FYSB and ODARE. This project is being conducted by Abt Associates.

Implications Of Research On Toxic Stress And Self-Regulation For ACF Programs

This project will explore the implications for ACF programs of research on toxic stress on development from early childhood through adolescence to young adulthood. A particular focus is being placed on the development of self-regulation and the effectiveness of interventions to promote self-regulation. The work is being conducted by Duke University.

Preventing Family Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a significant problem for women and men in the United States, with 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men experiencing severe physical violence by an intimate partner in his or her lifetime. Furthermore, the prevalence of IPV is higher among low-income populations and populations of color (specifically African American, American Indian, Alaska Native and multiracial persons). The Family Violence Prevention and Service Act (FVPSA) is the primary federal funding stream dedicated to the support of emergency shelter and related assistance for victims of domestic violence and their children. ACF's Family Violence Prevention and Services Division oversees FVPSA-funded programming, and DFS conducts IPV research work in close collaboration with this division.

In addition to the projects highlighted below, projects in the nurturing children through families and healthy relationship sections also include work relevant to IPV, specifically:

- **Parents and Children Together Evaluation,**
- **Family Strengthening Secondary Data Analysis Grants, and**
- **Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation.**

NEW

Responding to Intimate Violence in Relationship Programs

The broad, long-term objective of the Responding to Intimate Violence in Relationship Programs (RIViR) project is to understand how to best identify and address IPV in the context healthy relationship programming. The specific aims of RIViR are (1) to describe IPV experiences and service needs among healthy relationship program participants; (2) to summarize existing healthy relationship programs' approaches to addressing IPV; (3) to develop a theoretical framework to understand how best to identify and best serve healthy relationship program participants who are experiencing IPV; and (4) to develop protocols for serving for the diverse range of healthy relationship program participants who are experiencing IPV. To accomplish these goals, the research team will synthesize and review existing empirical and programmatic data, conduct interviews with healthy relationship program evaluation contractors and healthy relationship program staff, and consult with leading experts in the field of IPV and healthy relationship programming. Subject to availability of funds and other considerations, a follow-on component of the project will test IPV screening instruments and protocols in healthy relationship programs. This project is being carried out by RTI International.

NEW

Accomplishments of the Domestic Violence Hotline, On-line Connections, and Text

The **National Domestic Violence Hotline** (NDVH) and the **National Dating Abuse Helpline** (NDAH), which are supported by the Division of Family Violence Prevention and Services within the Family and Youth Services Bureau, serve as critical partners in the intervention, prevention, and resource assistance efforts of the network of family violence, domestic violence, and dating violence service providers. They provide crisis intervention and support services; information about resources on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence; and nationwide referrals and direct connections to domestic violence shelters and programs. The purpose of this contract is to describe the activities and accomplishments of the two hotlines and develop ways for the NDVH and NDAH to collect information on their activities and performance on an ongoing basis. To accomplish these goals, the research team will access extensive existing data collected by the hotlines on the services they provide, the needs and requests of those who contact them, and the anonymous transcripts of on-line chats, texts, and calls. Because all contacts are anonymous and no personally identifying information is collected by the NDVH and the NDAH, this project will maintain the highest standards of confidentiality while utilizing vast amounts of informative data. In addition, new data will be collected as necessary, while still maintaining confidentiality. This project is being carried out by the George Washington University.

Other and Cross-Cutting Research

In addition to research that falls clearly within the substantive areas of family strengthening, DFS is involved in OPRE projects whose focus spans the issues facing low-income children and families in a cross-cutting way. These cross-cutting projects may look at the populations served by multiple ACF programs, may include projects that may have multiple foci within the project goals of which family strengthening is one focus, or the project may focus on research methodology to support high-quality evaluations across OPRE work.

Research Development Project on Human Service Needs of LGBT Populations

This project is documenting what we know – and, more importantly, what we don't know – about whether and how low-income and at-risk lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) populations need, take-up, and interface with the human services administered by ACF. It is conducting a needs assessment, focused on key areas for further research and evaluation. And it will create research-focused recommendations related to any data gaps and human service needs of LGBT populations to inform ACF's research agenda. A sub-study in the project has sponsored site visits to selected Runaway and Homeless Youth programs to examine how these programs collect data and target services to homeless LGBT youth. Reports are expected to be available in 2015. This project is in collaboration with ASPE. This project is being carried out by Mathematica Policy Research, with their subcontractor, the Williams Institute.

Methods Inquiries

OPRE plays a central role in advancing understanding and disseminating knowledge about research and evaluation methods and tools that are, or could be, used to enhance knowledge about program and policy effectiveness. The purpose of the Methods Inquiries project, awarded to RTI International, is to organize meetings that bring together expertise from varying disciplines and policy fields to explore innovations in research design, analytic techniques and data measurement that could be employed to advance the government's use of rigorous and innovative research methods. In addition, the contractor will disseminate information gathered during the contract period and presented at the meetings.

Center For Research on Hispanic Children & Families

The National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families generates new research and translates research across three priority areas—poverty reduction and self-sufficiency, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, and early care and education—to build knowledge and inform ACF programs and policies to better serve Hispanic children and families. The Center has three primary goals: 1) advance a cutting-edge research agenda; 2) build research capacity; and 3) translate emerging research. Lina Guzman at Child Trends and Michael Lopez at Abt Associates lead the Center, in collaboration with university partners (University of Maryland-College Park; University of North Carolina at Greensboro; and New York University's Institute for Human Development and Social Change). In 2014, the Center launched a **Summer Research Fellowship** program supporting emerging scholars studying issues relevant to low-income and vulnerable Hispanic children and families.

For more information about the research activities and resources of the National Research Center on Hispanic Children and Families, see <http://www.childtrends.org/our-research/latino-children-and-families/the-national-research-center-on-hispanic-children-and-families/>.

Links to Projects and Reports

Supporting Fatherhood

Building Bridges and Bonds

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/building-bridges-and-bonds>

Fatherhood Research and Practice Network

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/the-fatherhood-research-and-practice-network>

Ex-Prisoner Reentry Strategies Study

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/ex-prisoner-reentry-strategies-study>

Home Visiting – Approaches to Father Engagement and Fathers’ Experiences

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/home-visiting-approaches-to-father-engagement-and-fathers-experiences>

Strengthening Relationships

Parents and Children Together

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/parents-and-children-together-pact-evaluation>

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education - Models and Measures

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/healthy-marriage-relationship-education-models-and-measures>

Fatherhood and Marriage Local Evaluation and Cross-Site Project

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/fatherhood-and-marriage-local-evaluation-famle-and-cross-site-project>

Secondary Analyses of Strengthening Families Datasets

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/secondary-analyses-of-strengthening-families-datasets>

Family Strengthening Scholar Grants

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/family-strengthening-scholars>

Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Curricula Review

<http://hmrffcurriculum.acf.hhs.gov/>

National Survey of Family Growth

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-family-growth-cycle-6-project-nsfg-2002-2003>

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Two-Parent Families Study

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families-two-parent-families-study>

Building Strong Families

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/building-strong-families>

Supporting Healthy Marriage

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/supporting-healthy-marriages-2003-2013>

Community Healthy Marriage Initiative

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/evaluation-of-community-healthy-marriage-initiatives-chmi>

Nurturing Children Through Families

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation (MIHOPE)

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/maternal-infant-and-early-childhood-home-visiting-evaluation>

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation – Strong Start

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/mother-and-infant-home-visiting-program-evaluation-strong-start-mihope-ss>

Mother and Infant Home Visiting Program Evaluation – Check In

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/mihope-check-in-project>

Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness

<http://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/>

Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/tribal-research-center-on-early-childhood-under-the-affordable-care-acts>

Design Options for Home Visiting Evaluation

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/design-options-for-home-visiting-evaluation-dohve-2010-2015>

Tribal Home Visiting Evaluation Institute

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/tribal-home-visiting-evaluation-institute-2011-2015>

Spotlight on Family Strengthening Research for American Indian and Alaska Natives

Tribal Early Childhood Research Center

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/tribal-research-center-on-early-childhood-under-the-affordable-care-acts>

HomVEE Tribal Report

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/resource/homvee-tribal-evidence-review>

Tribal Home Visiting Evaluation Institute

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/tribal-home-visiting-evaluation-institute-2011-2015>

Understanding Urban Indians' Interactions with ACF Programs and Services Project

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/understanding-urban-indians-interactions-with-acf-programs-and-services>

Supporting Positive Youth Development and Reducing Teen Pregnancy

Evaluation of the Personal Responsibility Education Program

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/personal-responsibility-education-program-prep-multi-component>

Gauging the Effectiveness of the Transitional Living Program

<http://www.abtassociates.com/Projects/2012/Gauging-the-Effectiveness-of-the-Transitional-Livi.aspx>

Preventing Family Violence

Responding to Intimate Violence in Relationship Programs

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/responding-to-intimate-violence-in-relationship-programs-rivir>

Accomplishments of the Domestic Violence Hotline, On-line Connections, and Text

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/accomplishments-of-the-domestic-violence-hotline-on-line-connections-and-text>

Other and Cross-Cutting Research

Research Development Project on Human Service Needs of LGBT Populations

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/research-development-project-on-human-service-needs-of-lgbt-populations>

Methods Inquiries

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/methods-inquiries>

Center For Research on Hispanic Children & Families

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/center-for-research-on-hispanic-children-families>

Family Strengthening Research: FY 2014

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