

## PARENTS' FAIR SHARE

### Study Information

#### Program overview

Parents' Fair Share (PFS) was a large, multisite demonstration of programs to help low-income, noncustodial parents find stable employment, increase their earnings and payment of child support, and become more involved parents. PFS provided four types of services: (1) employment and training, including skills training and education, on-the-job training, and job-search assistance; (2) peer support through curriculum-focused group meetings of noncustodial parents; (3) voluntary mediation between custodial and noncustodial parents; and (4) enhanced child support enforcement (CSE), such as lowering child support orders during PFS participation and modifying orders after the fathers find work. The program was mandatory for most participants, who were referred through court hearings for not paying child support or who did not have the means to pay child support.

#### Study overview

The studies of the program included information on implementation and impacts of PFS. The authors found that several sites experienced challenges in recruiting the targeted number of enrollees. Potential participants often did not show up for their hearings, and most of those who did show up were not eligible for the program. While most sites were able to implement peer support and job-search assistance as planned, some had difficulty providing the full range of skill-building and job-training activities, especially on-the-job training. For example, employers were often reluctant to accept participants because of prior incarceration and additional reporting requirements. Participation was highest in the peer support groups, which ended up being the primary activity in PFS, and lower in skill building and mediation.

To measure impacts, 5,611 fathers were randomly assigned to PFS (2,819 fathers) or a comparison group (2,792 fathers). PFS improved the likelihood of the noncustodial parent making formal payments through the CSE system and also increased the average amount paid. However, PFS did not affect whether the noncustodial parent provided informal cash payments or in-kind support, and it decreased the average value of informal (cash or in-kind) payments made. There were no differences between the PFS and comparison groups related to fathers' involvement with the child, parenting, co-parenting, the relationship between the noncustodial mothers and custodial fathers, or domestic violence. One exception was that mothers in the PFS group were more likely than mothers in the comparison group to report having frequent disagreements with the noncustodial father.

---

---

There were also no significant differences between the groups in employment or earnings. ***The study has two ratings. For all outcomes except fathers' employment and earnings, the study has a HIGH rating because the sample had low attrition, no confounding factors, and statistical adjustments for selected baseline variables. For the analysis of fathers' employment and earnings, the study has a MODERATE rating because baseline variables were not included in the analyses.***

**Citation**

Knox, V., and C. Redcross. "Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement." New York: Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), October 2000.

Additional sources:

Doolittle, F., V. Knox, C. Miller, and S. Rowser. "Building Opportunities, Enforcing Obligations: Implementation and Interim Impacts of Parents' Fair Share." New York: MDRC, December 1998.

Martinez, J. M., and C. Miller. "Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income Fathers' Employment." New York: MDRC, October 2000.

Miller, C., and V. Knox. "The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share." New York: MDRC, November 2001.

## Study and Sample Characteristics

**Study design**

The study is a randomized controlled design in which fathers were randomly assigned to PFS (2,819 fathers) or a comparison group (2,792 fathers). Approximately 12 months after random assignment, a survey was administered to a random subsample of custodial mothers associated with fathers. Attrition was low for the data collected through this survey, and this portion of the study has a high rating. For the analysis of employment earnings, one site was not included because complete follow-up data were not available. The authors did not establish that the groups were equivalent at baseline and did not control for baseline variables; this portion of the study has a moderate rating. This profile excluded the results based on a survey sample of 553 fathers; this sample had high attrition and baseline equivalence was not established.

**Comparison condition**

The fathers in the comparison group did not receive PFS and were subject to standard enforcement procedures.

**Conflicts of interest**

The Responsible Fatherhood curriculum was created by MDRC, the PFS evaluator.

**Sample size**

The sample characteristics were based on 261 noncustodial parents in the comparison group. For the outcomes analysis (except employment and earnings), the analytic sample included 2,005 (991 treatment and 1,014 comparison). For the analysis of employment and earnings, the analytic sample included 5,020 fathers (2,525 treatment and 2,495 comparison).

---

---

<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	White: 14.8 percent African American: 59.6 percent Hispanic/Latino: 23.2 percent Other: 2.3 percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male: 100 percent Female: 0 percent
<b>Age</b>	Mean: 31 years Under 25 years: 26.8 percent 26 to 34 years: 46.7 percent 35 years or older: 26.4 percent
<b>Educational attainment</b>	No high school diploma or GED: 49.5 percent High school diploma or GED: 49.9 percent Associate's degree or higher: 0.6 percent
<b>Employment, income, or earnings</b>	Not reported
<b>Household income</b>	Not reported
<b>Receive public assistance</b>	Not reported
<b>In child support system</b>	100 percent

## Reported Outcomes

<b>Timing</b>	<p>The custodial parent survey was conducted approximately 12 months after the associated noncustodial parent was randomly assigned.</p> <p>The authors collected data on child support 7 to 12 months after random assignment. They collected data on employment and earnings for eight quarters.</p>
<b>Description of measures</b>	<p><b><i>HIGH rating</i></b></p> <p>The authors used administrative data from the CSE system to measure fathers' formal child support payments.</p> <p>In addition, the authors used a survey of custodial mothers to collect data on many outcomes:</p> <p><u>Fathers' financial support of children</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support received of any type</li> <li>Formal child support payments received</li> <li>Informal cash support payments received</li> <li>In-kind support received</li> </ul>

---

---

	<u>Father involvement</u>
	Frequency of father's in-person visits with the child
	Frequency of father's phone/mail contacts with the child
	<u>Fathers' parenting skills</u>
	Whether the custodial parent reported any improvement in the noncustodial father's role as a parent
	<u>Co-parenting</u>
	How often the parents discussed the child
	Whether the noncustodial parent was involved in major decisions about the child
	<u>Relationship status and quality</u>
	Frequency of disagreements between the parents
	Style of conflict (discuss calmly, keep opinions to self, argue loudly, hit/throw things at each other)
	<u>Domestic violence</u>
	Whether the mother had a restraining order against the father
	<b><i>MODERATE rating</i></b>
	Employment and earnings were measured using unemployment insurance (UI) wage records.
<b>Outcomes: Fathers' economic self-sufficiency</b>	<b><i>MODERATE rating</i></b>
	There were no significant differences between the treatment and comparison groups in employment or earnings. This was true for the first and second years after random assignment.
<b>Outcomes: Fathers' well-being</b>	Not reported
<b>Outcomes: Fathers' financial support of children</b>	<b><i>HIGH rating</i></b>
	The results showed that PFS increased the likelihood of the noncustodial parent making formal payments. However, PFS did not affect whether the noncustodial parent provided informal cash payments, in-kind support, or no support.
	The authors also found that PFS increased the cash amount of formal payments made by the noncustodial parent, but it decreased the cash amount of informal payments as well as the value of in-kind support from the noncustodial parent. No impact was found on the total dollar value of support received.
<b>Outcomes: Fathers' involvement with children</b>	<b><i>HIGH rating</i></b>
	PFS did not affect the frequency of in-person, phone, or mail contacts that noncustodial parents had with their children.

---

---

<b>Outcomes: Parenting skills</b>	<b><i>HIGH rating</i></b> The authors found that PFS did not affect the likelihood of mothers reporting that the father had improved as a parent.
<b>Outcomes: Co-parenting</b>	<b><i>HIGH rating</i></b> PFS had no effect on how often the parents discussed the child or whether the noncustodial parent was involved with the custodial parent in major decisions about the child.
<b>Outcomes: Relationship status and quality</b>	<b><i>HIGH rating</i></b> PFS increased the proportion of custodial mothers who reported a disagreement with the noncustodial parents. No effect was found on the style of conflict (aggressive, withdrawn, or calm).
<b>Outcomes: Domestic violence</b>	<b><i>HIGH rating</i></b> The authors reported that PFS had no effect on whether the custodial mothers had a restraining order against the noncustodial father within the prior six months.
<b>Outcomes: Child outcomes</b>	Not reported
<b>Outcomes: Other</b>	Not reported

### Program Model

<b>Theoretical framework</b>	<p>The authors specified the mechanisms through which the four components of the model were expected to improve employment, earnings, child support compliance, and family relationships.</p> <p><u>Employment and earnings:</u> Employment and training services were expected to lead to stable employment and higher earnings by improving parents' job skills, helping them find jobs with higher wages, expanding their access to jobs for which they were qualified, and providing support after employment. Peer support was expected to lead to more stable employment by improving participants' commitment to work, communication, and conflict-management skills. The authors expected that mediation services would improve interparental relationships, thereby increasing noncustodial parents' interest in working to help support their children. The authors did not expect enhanced CSE to affect employment outcomes.</p> <p><u>Child support payment and family relationships:</u> Employment and training were expected to help noncustodial parents increase their income, which would lead to increases in child support payments. In the long run, the authors expected enhanced CSE to improve payment of child support through closer monitoring and more timely implementation of wage-withholding orders. They also expected mediation and peer support to improve child support compliance through resolution of family conflicts and greater involvement of noncustodial parents in their children's lives.</p>
------------------------------	---

---

---

<b>Participant eligibility</b>	Participation in PFS was mandatory for noncustodial parents who were court-ordered into the program nonpayment of child support or lack of means to pay child support obligations. These parents were typically unemployed or underemployed.
<b>Participant needs assessment</b>	Once enrolled in PFS, participants were assigned to a case manager who worked with them to assess their needs for employment and training. Specific forms or instruments used for this purpose were not reported.
<b>Program components</b>	Four core components made up the PFS program: peer support, employment and training, enhanced CSE, and mediation. Mediation was the only voluntary component.
<b>Program content</b>	<p>The program components and services were designed to complement one another. Participants began the program with the first component, the peer support group, which was structured around a curriculum called Responsible Fatherhood. This component could also include mentoring arrangements, recreational activities, and planned parent-child activities.</p> <p>Peer support centered on a curriculum called Responsible Fatherhood, provided by MDRC. The curriculum covered the following 18 topics and 4 optional sessions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction to Responsible Fatherhood</li> <li>2. What Are My Values?</li> <li>3. Manhood</li> <li>4. The Art of Communication</li> <li>5. Fathers as Providers</li> <li>6. Noncustodial Parents: Rights and Responsibilities</li> <li>7. Developing Values in Children</li> <li>8. Coping as a Single Father (or Sometimes Weekend Dad)</li> <li>9. Dealing with Children's Behaviors</li> <li>10. Relationships: Being a Friend, Partner, Parent, and Employee</li> <li>11. Understanding Male/Female Relationships</li> <li>12. Managing Conflict and Handling Anger</li> <li>13. Handling Anger and Conflict on the Job</li> <li>14. Surviving on the Job</li> <li>15. The Issue of Race/Racism</li> <li>16. Taking Care of Business</li> <li>17. Managing Your Time and Money</li> <li>18. Building a Support Network: Who's on Your Side?</li> </ol>

---

---

	<p>Optional sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Alcohol and Drug Use and Abuse</li> <li>Food as Common Ground</li> <li>Eating for Health</li> <li>Cooking for Health</li> </ul> <p>The employment and training component included case management and referrals, job searches and development, basic education, job clubs, and on-the-job training. These services were typically provided by outside agencies funded through the Job Training and Partnership Act (JTPA).</p> <p>The component on enhanced CSE was designed to allow each site develop procedures to monitor cases and to help reduce child support orders while parents participated in PFS. Modifications to child support orders also were made more quickly after a parent found employment.</p> <p>Mediation services, which were voluntary, provided structured opportunities for custodial and noncustodial parents to work out disagreements on visitation, household expenditures, child care and school arrangements, and other issues.</p> <p>Some sites offered peer support concurrently with other components; other sites only provided the other components after peer support ended.</p>
<b>Program length</b>	<p>Participants were required to stay in the program until they either found work or became noncompliant with child support orders (at which point they were referred back to the CSE agency). On average, participants attended 15 sessions of the peer component and spent 5 months in the program (Doolittle et al. 1998).</p> <p>Participants typically began PFS by meeting with their case manager and attending an orientation session. They were then assigned to a peer support group, which met two or three times a week for six to eight weeks. Some sites offered peer support concurrently with the other components, while other sites only offered the other components after peer support was completed.</p>
<b>Targeted outcomes</b>	To help fathers find stable employment, pay child support, and become more involved in their children's lives.
<b>Program adaptations</b>	The Responsible Fatherhood curriculum was created by MDRC, the program evaluator, during the pilot phase of PFS. Responsible Fatherhood was based on an earlier curriculum developed by Public/Private Ventures called Fatherhood Development: A Curriculum for Young Fathers.
<b>Available languages</b>	Not reported
<b>Fidelity measures</b>	MDRC called and visited sites regularly to monitor fidelity and compliance.
<b>Program costs</b>	Not reported

---

---

**Implementation challenges and solutions**

While most sites were able to implement peer support and job-search assistance as planned, some had difficulty providing the full range of skill-building and job-training activities, especially on-the-job training. The authors indicated that this may have been because service providers had limited experience working with and designing services for very disadvantaged clients. Many PFS participants were “hard to employ,” and sites often found that employers were reluctant to hire or provide these participants with on-the-job training. Another barrier to placing or training hard-to-serve clients was JTPA’s specific eligibility, performance, and reporting requirements.

The authors indicated that some sites also experienced challenges in developing effective working partnerships between collaborating agencies at the outset of the program. For example, PFS wanted CSE agencies to prioritize PFS cases. However, CSE staff often had a standard way of prioritizing cases and were reluctant to change, and PFS lead agencies did not always treat the CSE agency as a full partner. Such problems appeared to stem from the need for service providers and government agencies to adopt new roles and develop new procedures specific to PFS.

Finally, the authors stated that low enrollment made it particularly difficult to implement some services designed to be delivered in group settings (such as job club and peer support). The authors also indicated that payments for operational costs were tied to enrollment figures in each site. This limited the resources available for sites to implement the program well.

Two sites were able to develop relationships with providers that had worked with disadvantaged populations; these sites achieved relatively higher participation in skill-building activities. They also worked to identify the type of jobs each individual was suited for before searching for appropriate employers.

**Program Structure**
**Was there a planning or pilot phase?**

Yes

**Length of planning/pilot**

The program was piloted for two years, from 1992 to 1994.

**Timeframe for program operation**

 The full program operated from 1994 to 1996 (two years).
 

---

<b>Sites and service-delivery settings</b>	<p>Sites in seven cities participated in the PFS demonstration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Los Angeles, California</li> <li>• Jacksonville, Florida</li> <li>• Springfield, Massachusetts</li> <li>• Grand Rapids, Michigan</li> <li>• Trenton, New Jersey</li> <li>• Dayton, Ohio</li> <li>• Memphis, Tennessee</li> </ul> <p>Each site consisted of local partnerships between child support agencies, employment and training providers, and community-based service organizations, the latter typically serving as the program “home.” The authors did not specify the number of service-delivery locations within each site.</p>
<b>Required facilities</b>	Not reported
<b>Community settings</b>	Urban
<b>Organizational partnerships</b>	PFS had funding partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies as well as with foundations. It also had operations partnerships that linked agencies, including CSE, welfare, JTPA employment and training, and community-based agencies.
<b>Funding agency</b>	PFS received federal funding from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Labor, and Health and Human Services. States provided some matching funds, local agencies contributed funding or in-kind contributions, and foundations also provided funding.
<b>Agency certifications and national affiliations</b>	Site-level partnerships included local and state CSE agencies and JTPA employment and training agencies.
<b>Was participation mandatory?</b>	Yes, men were court-ordered to attend.
<b>Staffing and Operations</b>	
<b>Staff characteristics</b>	The staffing structure included (1) case managers, who were assigned a caseload of participants to manage throughout their stay in the program and (2) specialists, such as job developers or group facilitators for the peer support sessions. In many sites, staff often played more than one role or changed roles over time. The authors did not discuss any specific qualifications for these roles.
<b>Staff training</b>	Facilitators for the peer group component were trained by a consultant to MDRC. Job-development experts provided training to employment staff.
<b>Training materials</b>	Not reported
<b>Trainer qualifications</b>	Not reported

<b>Staff performance standards</b>	Not reported
<b>Staff-participants ratio or caseloads</b>	<p>In a few sites, the CSE agency assigned specific staff members to handle PFS cases and reduced their caseloads.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grand Rapids: Typical CSE caseload was 3,500; PFS caseload was 250</li> <li>• Los Angeles: Typical CSE caseload was 1,500; PFS caseload was 350</li> <li>• Memphis: Typical CSE caseload was 9,000; PFS caseload was 150</li> <li>• Trenton: Typical CSE caseload was 600; PFS caseload was 200</li> </ul>
<b>Staff supervisors</b>	Not reported
<b>Staff supervision frequency</b>	Not reported
<b>Technical assistance</b>	<p>MDRC provided or facilitated technical assistance in several ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Staff visited sites and met with providers and site managers.</li> <li>2. Site staff were encouraged to visit other sites to observe and obtain peer assistance (particularly for sites that were experiencing difficulties in a specific area).</li> <li>3. Peer group facilitators received curriculum training and debriefing.</li> <li>4. Employment staff received instruction on job club/job search and on-the-job training components.</li> <li>5. Managers attended conferences to share information with other sites.</li> </ol> <p>Sites also received payments of \$150,000 to \$265,000, which were used to access matching federal funds.</p>
<b>Operations manual, forms, or protocols</b>	Not reported
<b>System for tracking program performance</b>	MDRC administered a management information system to track participant enrollment, participation, and outcomes.
<b>Recruitment</b>	
<b>Referral sources</b>	Courts and CSE agencies referred low-income, noncustodial parents who were unemployed or underemployed.

---

<b>Recruitment method</b>	<p>Sites used various methods to identify and enroll participants. Staff in two sites reviewed court dockets for scheduled child support hearings to identify potential referrals. However, because low-income, noncustodial parents were not a priority before PFS, few had been scheduled for such hearings. The remaining sites therefore implemented “extra outreach” methods, which included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reviewing child support caseloads to identify those who were potentially eligible and notifying them to appear at a court hearing or appointment at the CSE office to discuss their case.</li> <li>2. Identifying potential participants from other sources, such as new referrals from the welfare agency to the CSE agency, caseloads of people close to exhausting their unemployment insurance benefits, and records of local births to Medicaid recipients.</li> <li>3. Arranging and conducting hearings for large groups of potentially eligible noncustodial parents.</li> <li>4. Conducting home visits to encourage attendance at court hearings or CSE appointments.</li> </ol> <p>Once a potential participant appeared in court or at their designated appointment, CSE staff or PFS staff (depending on the site) verified the person’s eligibility and enrolled him into PFS.</p>
<b>Recruitment incentives</b>	Not reported
<b>Participants targeted</b>	<p>Target enrollment for all sites was 10,030. Number targeted by each site:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dayton—2,160</li> <li>• Grand Rapids—1,080</li> <li>• Jacksonville—1,300</li> <li>• Los Angeles—1,140</li> <li>• Memphis—1,350</li> <li>• Springfield—1,500</li> <li>• Trenton—1,500</li> </ul>
<b>Participants recruited</b>	<p>A total of 5,640 participants were recruited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dayton—664</li> <li>• Grand Rapids—1,083</li> <li>• Jacksonville—775</li> <li>• Los Angeles—1,088</li> <li>• Memphis—813</li> <li>• Springfield—592</li> <li>• Trenton—625</li> </ul>

---

---

<b>Recruitment timeframe</b>	Two years (1994–1996)
<b>Recruitment challenges and solutions</b>	Several sites experienced challenges in recruiting the targeted number of participants. Despite the additional recruitment methods described above, potential participants often did not show up for their hearings. Among those who did show up, only 25 percent were found to be eligible. One of the most common reasons for ineligibility was that the parent was already employed, and the agencies were unaware of this.
<b>Participation</b>	
<b>Participation incentives</b>	Fathers' child support orders were often reduced while they participated in the program. States were able to reduce these obligations because the custodial parent was typically receiving welfare (or had received welfare in the past when the noncustodial parent was in arrears). In such situations, the noncustodial parent owed child support to the state rather than to the custodial parent.
<b>Initial engagement in services</b>	<p>The data below only include fathers who participated within 18 months of random assignment.</p> <p>Any activity: 70.4 percent</p> <p>Peer support: 64.3 percent</p> <p>Job club or workshop: 56.7 percent</p> <p>Skills training: 8.2 percent</p> <p>Basic education: 11.5 percent</p> <p>On-the-job training: 11.8 percent</p> <p>Mediation: 2.8 percent</p>
<b>Retention</b>	<p>Participation</p> <p>One to three months: 47 percent</p> <p>Four to six months: 26 percent</p> <p>At least seven months: 27 percent</p> <p>Overall, 7.3 percent participated for more than 12 months.</p>

---

---

**Participation  
challenges and  
solutions**

Participation was highest in the peer support groups, which ended up being the primary activity of PFS. The authors described peer support as an opportunity for participants to talk through and obtain advice about employment, family, and parenting.

In most sites, participation in the skill-building component was low. This was due to difficulty in finding employers willing to provide on-the-job training. Employers were often reluctant to accept participants because of prior incarceration and additional reporting requirements. A few sites worked with employment agencies that had experience working with hard-to-place and very disadvantaged clients, which proved beneficial and increased participation rates in those sites.

Participation in mediation also was low. The authors reported that many parents, noncustodial or custodial, were not interested in the services, and PFS staff did not prioritize this component of the program.

---