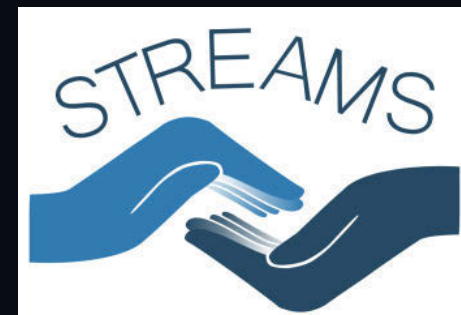




Federal Evaluations for  
Responsible Fatherhood and  
Healthy Marriage Grantees



BUILDING BRIDGES & BONDS (B3)  
and  
STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION  
AND MARRIAGE SERVICES (STREAMS)

May 2015

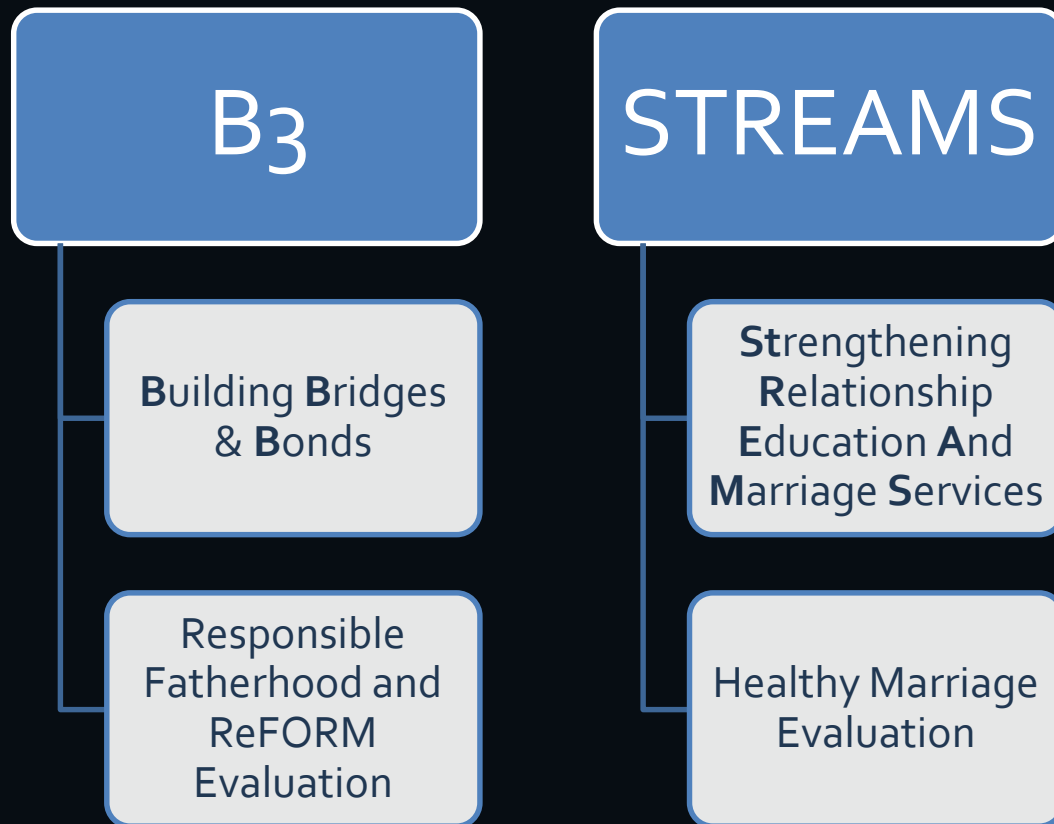
# INTRODUCING B<sub>3</sub> AND STREAMS

Anna Solmeyer

Social Science Research Analyst and B3 Project Officer  
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation  
Administration for Children and Families

# INTRODUCING B<sub>3</sub> & STREAMS

- Federal evaluations are part of ACF's comprehensive learning agenda



# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LOCAL AND FEDERAL EVALUATIONS

Local Evaluations	Federal Evaluations
All grantees are expected to develop a local evaluation plan	A small set of grantees will be part of the federal evaluation
Led by a local evaluator who is identified by the grantee	Led by independent federal contractors
Funding for the evaluation is reserved from total grant award	Funding for the evaluation is provided by the federal contract; may provide additional funds to support programming and study participation

# FEDERAL EVALUATION AND THE GRANT APPLICATION AND AWARD PROCESS

- Approximately 6 RF and 6 HM sites will be chosen for the federal evaluations
- The B3 and STREAMS selection process is separate from the grant selection process
  - Selection for the evaluation will take place after grants are awarded
  - The B3 and STREAMS teams have no role in grant decisions
  - No additional points will be awarded for including mentioned approaches in funding proposals
  - The study teams may not work with programs on grant applications

# IF SELECTED FOR A FEDERAL EVALUATION

- The federal government may incorporate the local evaluation into the federally-led evaluation; OR
- The federal government may waive the local evaluation requirement; OR
- The local evaluation may continue in parallel to the federal evaluation.

# WHAT ARE B3 AND STREAMS?

- Rigorous, multi-site studies of innovative services offered by Responsible Fatherhood/ReFORM (RF) and Healthy Marriage (HM) programs
- Unique opportunity for the program and research communities to produce new evidence about specific service approaches
- OFA and other stakeholders are involved in helping B3 and STREAMS to set priorities

# KEY QUESTIONS ADDRESSED IN B<sub>3</sub> AND STREAMS



- What outcomes do the services affect?  
(Impact analysis)
  - Examine effects of program components, including program approaches and implementation factors
  - Measure impacts using random assignment
- How are impacts achieved?  
(Process analysis)
  - Give context to impact findings
  - Describe how component was delivered, staff/participant views of services, and challenges and solutions



# STUDY TEAMS

- Sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
  - B3 conducted by
    - MDRC, in partnership with
    - MEF Associates
    - Abt SRBI
    - Leading experts in the field
  - STREAMS conducted by
    - Mathematica Policy Research, in partnership with
    - Public Strategies
    - Leading experts in the field



Virginia Knox  
MDRC

**BUILDING  
BRIDGES &  
BONDS | B3**



# WHY B<sub>3</sub>?



- Fathers play a distinct role in children's lives
- However, they often face barriers to positive economic and emotional involvement with their children
- Improving outcomes for low-income fathers and children is a high priority for policymakers
- A number of promising approaches are emerging, but there is a limited evidence base



# STUDY GOALS

- Provide evidence about strategies that
  - Are feasible in RF program context
  - Improve outcomes
  - Have the potential to change practice
- Build knowledge in three areas
  - Employment
  - Parenting and co-parenting
  - Participant recruitment and engagement





# A RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP

- B3 is planning ongoing communication with the entire range of stakeholders
  - January 2015 meeting: Heard views from several current grantees and fatherhood researchers about potential priorities for B3
  - Newsletter and at RFHM grantee conferences: Continue the dialogue
  - Ongoing: Will work closely with sites throughout recruitment, random assignment, and implementation



# COMPLEMENTARY STUDIES

- B3 is one of several studies providing new evidence for RF field
- Others include
  - Local evaluations from next cohort of RF grantees
  - Parents and Children Together (PACT)
  - Fatherhood Research and Practice Network
- B3 complements these studies with its focus on individual program components and implementation features





# WHAT WE KNOW

- Fathers in PACT report that their participation is motivated by
  - Employment
  - Better relationships with their children
- RF programs are
  - Important to local communities
  - Strong partners to other organizations
  - A forum for men to discuss their roles as fathers and support each other's efforts
  - Like other federal programs, increasingly focused on evidence of effectiveness





# HIGH-PRIORITY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



- Challenge
  - Help men find and maintain better jobs with higher earnings than they can find on their own
- Promising approaches
  - Active job development
  - Services informed by cognitive behavioral principles
  - Wage subsidies
  - Industry-specific training





# HIGH-PRIORITY PARENTING SERVICES

- Challenges
  - Build parenting skills of dads even if not living with children
  - Increase conflict management skills and reduce co-parenting conflict for both parents
- Promising approaches
  - Parenting curricula involving the child
  - Co-parenting sessions involving the mother
  - Parenting curricula with some evidence





# PROGRAM RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT



- Participant recruitment, engagement, and retention are a central issue for many programs
- B3 seeks to
  - Work with programs to identify and test new approaches in this area
  - Apply learnings from “behavioral economics”
- The study team will help sites
  - Identify current challenges
  - Test multiple strategies
  - Assess and refine enhancements



# DESIRED STUDY SITE CHARACTERISTICS

- Funded through OFA Responsible Fatherhood or ReFORM grants and/or other sources
- Demonstrated experience running a fatherhood program
- Operating a high-priority strategy or willing to implement new program enhancements
- Capacity to recruit and serve approximately 500 fathers over 15-18 months



# B<sub>3</sub> STUDY TIMELINE

- 2015-2016: Site recruitment
- 2016-2017: Enroll participants into the study
- 2016-2018: Sites receive study support
- 2017-2019: Share lessons with RF field
- 2017: Implementation reports
- 2018: Impact reports
- 2019: Final synthesis reports

STREAMS



Strengthening Relationship  
Education and Marriage Services  
(STREAMS)

Robert G. Wood  
Mathematica Policy Research



# WHY STUDY HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP PROGRAMMING?

- Children fare best in stable, two-parent families where parents have healthy, positive relationships
- Half of American children will spend time in a single-parent family before they turn 18
- Policy priority: Increasing the likelihood that children grow up with two parents in a healthy relationship
- OFA healthy marriage grants support programs for both youth and adults with this ultimate goal





# GOALS OF STREAMS EVALUATION

Examine healthy relationship programming for both adults and youth

Focus on strategies that are feasible for OFA grantees and of high interest to the practice field

Focus on program improvement and answering questions of particular policy relevance



# KEEPING CONNECTED TO POLICY AND PRACTICE COMMUNITY



- We are consulting with healthy marriage practitioners and policy experts to get input on research priorities
- We'll produce quarterly newsletters to keep stakeholders up to date on study progress
- Throughout project, we'll engage practitioners and policy experts to ensure research focus and products remain relevant and useful





# BUILDING ON PRIOR RESEARCH AND EXPANDING THE RESEARCH BASE

## Adult Programming

Earlier research has shown mixed results

Offers directions for future study

## Youth Programming

Less thoroughly studied

STREAMS will expand what's known about these programs





# POPULATIONS OF INTEREST: ADULT PROGRAMMING

- Low-income parents raising children together
- Unmarried and married couples
- Single adults with children





# POTENTIAL PROGRAM APPROACHES OF INTEREST: ADULT PROGRAMMING

- Innovative approaches to healthy relationship services
  - Use of technology to enhance learning
- Integrating healthy relationship and economic stability services
- Supporting “executive functioning”
  - Goal setting, planning, ongoing tracking of progress





# POTENTIAL AREAS OF INTEREST: YOUTH PROGRAMMING



- Innovative programming offered in high schools
- Approaches for serving specific youth populations
- Multigenerational strategies that work with both youth and their parents



# IMPORTANT QUESTION: WHAT IMPROVES PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION?

- Effective programs must ensure:
  - High level of exposure to program services
  - High-quality service delivery
- STREAMS will aim to test strategies for improving:
  - Attendance and completion (through incentives, reminders, etc.)
  - Quality of services (through more intensive staff training/coaching; fidelity monitoring)



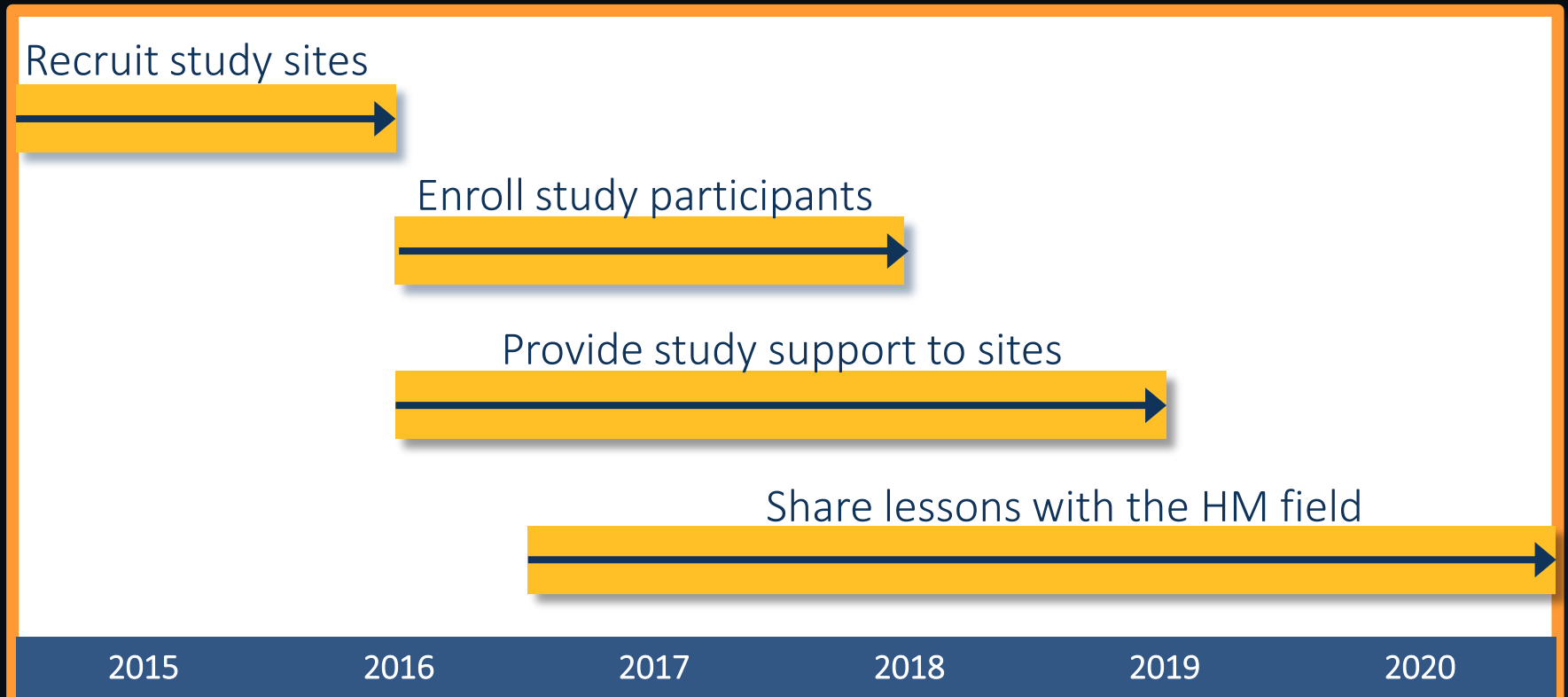
# WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR IN STUDY SITES?

- Partners excited about close collaboration on innovative research addressing top policy/practice issues
- Organizations focusing on priority target populations and program approaches
- Those willing to implement/test program strategies of high interest to the field
- Those able to recruit and serve substantial numbers of participants in a 1-2 year period





# STUDY TIMELINE



# WHAT WOULD PARTICIPATION IN B<sub>3</sub> OR STREAMS MEAN FOR GRANTEES?

Samantha Illangasekare

Social Science Research Analyst and STREAMS Project Officer

Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation

Administration for Children and Families



# BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN B<sub>3</sub> AND STREAMS



- May provide additional funds to support programming and study participation, for example, to support enhancements to services
- Expert technical assistance on
  - Participant recruitment and engagement
  - Program service being tested
  - Study procedures
- Specific results for your program
- Contribute to growing evidence base
- Increased visibility as part of a national study

# B<sub>3</sub> AND STREAMS STUDY TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- Maintain close communication with organizations, including visits, to learn about program operations, hear your interests, and brainstorm study options
- Facilitate meetings to plan study implementation
- Provide funding and other resources to support program enhancements and research activities
- Train and support program staff on study procedures
- Provide ongoing technical assistance to achieve high-quality program enhancement and research procedures
- Analyze data, share lessons, and publish reports

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## B3 (Responsible Fatherhood)

- MDRC (research contractor)  
Ginger Knox  
[b3@mdrc.org](mailto:b3@mdrc.org)  
<http://www.mdrc.org/b3>
- OPRE (federal office)  
Anna Solmeyer  
[Anna.Solmeyer@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Anna.Solmeyer@acf.hhs.gov)  
202-401-4055

## STREAMS (Healthy Marriage)

- Mathematica (research contractor)  
Robert G. Wood and Diane Paulsell  
[streams@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:streams@mathematica-mpr.com)  
<http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/streams>
- OPRE (federal office)  
Samantha Illangasekare  
[Samantha.Illangasekare@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Samantha.Illangasekare@acf.hhs.gov)  
202-401-5739

# QUESTIONS?

- **Respondents:**
  - Seth Chamberlain, Social Science Research Analyst, OPRE, FaMLE Cross-Site Project Officer
  - Samantha Illangasekare, Social Science Research Analyst, OPRE, STREAMS Project Officer
  - Anna Solmeyer, Social Science Research Analyst, OPRE, B3 Project Officer