## Webinar Transcript - Investing in Fatherhood: Supporting Native Fathers Struggling with Addiction

Welcome to the National Criminal Justice Training Center webinar, Investing in Fatherhood: Supporting Native American Fathers Struggling with Addiction. My name is Greg Brown, and I will be moderating for you today.

Today's presentation is part of a webinar series funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance focused on supporting tribal Comprehensive Opiate, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program and Coordinated Tribal Solicitation Purpose Area 3 grantees and other tribal communities focused on responses to alcohol and substance abuse.

Our presenter today is Kevin Poleyumptewa. Kevin's a Project Coordinator at the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College. Kevin provides training and technical assistance to American Indian, Alaska Native, tribal victim services programs.

Prior to his work with NCJTC, Kevin provided fatherhood and healthy relationship programming and training for various tribal communities, jails, treatment facilities, and youth programs. And he has served as the state director for the nonprofit Fathers and Families Coalition of Arizona, and was a member of the board of directors for the Fathers and Families Coalition of America.

My name's Greg Brown, and I'm a Program Manager with NCJTC. I worked in probation for a little over 30 years in Colorado as a probation officer, a supervisor, and a chief probation officer, the administrator for the department. I've been with NCJTC for a little over three years, providing program support for our Tribal Probation Academy and our victim-centered approaches to community supervision through the Office of Violence Against Women.

Before I turn it over to Kevin, I'd like to talk about how focusing on fatherhood is an evidence-based and best practice. As many of you know, evidence-based and best practices are the application of science into the operational practice for services, programs, and specifically today's practices, approaches, and programs for Native American men struggling with substance abuse and--substance and alcohol abuse.

As we look at best practices, the eight guiding principles comes to mind. Risk need responsivity is the first principle, enhancing intrinsic motivation, targeting interventions, train with directed skill development, increasing positive reinforcement, and engaging in ongoing community support.

One of the principles of enhancing intrinsic motivation for our clients that we work with is looking at what really works. We know intrinsic motivation is a key component in helping people change behavior. We know that when we dictate or tell someone what to do, it really doesn't work, especially in the long term. We must find things that our clients value and connect those values to the work that we're doing with them.

Most men, when you talk to them about their priorities in their life, they talk about being a good father. If we can help our clients become better fathers, we not only enhance their intrinsic motivation for change, we can also help them develop skills to raise their children as prosocial, contributing members of society, and help them model the way for their children.

So by paying attention to fatherhood, we enhance intrinsic motivation and we also create opportunities to target other principles. Specifically role modeling, practicing skills like communication, problem solving, moral decision making, and enhanced opportunities for cultural connections.

We also increase opportunities for positive reinforcement as they do the work to become better fathers and we can help them find ways to engage in ongoing support in the community by participating in a fatherhood program, as well as become involved in their kids' lives in school, cultural events or activities, sports, the arts. The list goes on. So today, I'm excited for you all to hear from Kevin. I've had the opportunity to hear his presentation before, and it makes so much sense that this is an area we need to focus on when working with people in our systems.

So I think the information and his expertise he's going to bring to you today is really exciting. And without further ado, I'd like to hand it over to Kevin Poleyumptewa. Kevin?

Hey, thanks, Greg. Welcome, everybody. Good morning, good afternoon, depending on where you're at. I am nestled here in the air conditioning in Phoenix. I think it's probably close to 110, somewhere around there today. So it's pretty warm outside.

But I'm glad to be here with you all today, and looking forward to this webinar that we're going to be having here with you today. So just want to go over real quickly the learning objectives that we have here today.

Before I do that, though, let me go ahead and just-- a little bit background of myself as well. As Greg mentioned, I've been working in the field of fatherhood since probably about 2006, and was my primary role when I was working with the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian community. I worked there for about 11 years, running and facilitating their fatherhood program, a Healthy Relationships program, and then also helped them to develop a youth mentorship program for their foster youth in the community there as well.

So got a lot of years working in the field, and I really have to say that that truly is my passion, working with men, Native men specifically. And really enjoyed that work that we did. I think it was very beneficial to me also just as a man, as a person. A Native man going through life and learning from them, I actually learned quite a bit from them as well.

So I'm happy to share some of my experiences here, some of the programming stuff. And that's really kind of what we're going to be looking at today is the programmatic piece of this, defining really what fatherhood is in terms of a program, what that can look like, and why it's important to invest in fatherhood, as Greg was talking about. Why is it so important that we focus on men within our community? So we'll be talking about that today.

And we'll be describing some of the benefits of fatherhood programs. What are some of the things that come out of it? What are some of the benefits that the men that go through these programs can walk away with, some of the things that they will learn, the tools that they'll develop?

And also, we'll be looking at identifying some of the resources for developing a fatherhood program. Who are those programs or organizations that should be involved as well that can help to enhance a program that you might have or looking to create? So we'll talk about that as well.

And then also develop strategies for working with fathers struggling with addiction. As we all know, addiction, substance abuse, alcohol abuse is very prevalent in our Native communities and amongst our Native brothers and sisters that are living in urban areas as well. And so it really is a big part of the Native culture, and so we have to address that.

And looking at some of those strategies and what are some of the things that work, some of the things that don't work? So we will be going through a lot of that today in this short time that we have.

So I'm going to go ahead and start us off with a short video clip here that really addresses what we're looking to be talking about today. So let me go ahead and play this for you here.

So I really like using that video, because it really does talk about or speak to what we see in our Native communities today. We know that for decades now, men have, for lack of better words, been absent, haven't been there fulfilling that role as leader, protector. And so that's what brings us to where we're at today and talking about this topic of fatherhood and why it's so important that we begin to invest in them, in our men.

I do want to draw your attention as well to the gentleman's response to the question or the statements of the interviewer when he said, every child needs a father. And his response wasn't in agreement. It was that every child needs a role model.

And so that's very important as well when we're talking about this work and who we're going to be working with. We'll talk about some of the different types of fathers that you can potentially work with. But really kind of hits home in talking about, what is a father? Who is a father? And whose responsibility is that? Whose role is that?

As we know, there are situations where maybe a child does not have a father. Maybe his father has passed away, his father's just not in the picture. So what happens to that child or children if that's the case? Who can fulfill that role?

And so when we're talking about our Native communities, or Native culture, in many of them the men in the community, typically the uncles, will assume that role as well. They take on that responsibility as fathers. So that model is already in place in addition to the children's biological father.

So there are ways to be able to provide that role of father for these children that may not necessarily have their biological father available for them to have these things. And that's really part of the educational process and learning process of these fatherhood programs here.

So I really enjoy sharing this video just to kind of paint that picture of what we're looking at in our communities, why it's important, and how the fathers, the males in our communities can help to kind of bring those kids back because we've seen-- we know that a lot of our youth are lost. They're confused. And some would say they don't have any respect. They're lazy. We don't know what to do with them.

And so we are able to provide this education and these tools to these men to help bring that back in, to be that positive role model within the communities, within the families, to help kind of bring those kids back together as well. And then also creating healthier and stronger families as well I think is the overall picture that we're looking at with this stuff here.

So again, what is a fatherhood program? Some of you may be asking that question. Some of you may also already have existing fatherhood programs within your community or even within your department.

And the fatherhood program is and really can be many things, and it really is dependent on what your mission is and what your goal is. What are you looking to accomplish out of this? And really, what fits your community?

A fatherhood program should be very specific to your community, to the population that you're serving there. There is no one fixall program. And same would go with curriculums as well. I think because every situation is different there's things that need to be adapted. They need to be changed in order to be more accommodating and specific to your particular community.

An important thing I think to remember also when we're working with men is, how do we get them to come to these programs. In some cases, their attendance could be mandated. Maybe it's because they are moving towards reunification with their kids. The kids have been removed from the home.

Or they could be coming out of prison, for example. They've been away for a long time and they're looking to kind of reunite and reintegrate into the family system. How do we assist them in doing that after being gone for so many years?

So it's important to understand how we label these programs. What is our program going to be called? And typically, they're not necessarily parenting programs because I think that parenting program in itself has a stigma attached to it as well.

As Greg mentioned earlier with men, talking to men in a way that we're not labeling them as bad parents. We don't want to put that label on them. They've already got so much other things that they're dealing with, as we'll talk about a little later, so we don't want to add to that. We don't want to put more stuff on them and create some walls or barriers for them.

So we really have to be strategic in what we're calling this program. And many of them are just called your basic fatherhood program. But most importantly I think is that what you're creating here is a safe space for men to be able to gather with other men in their community and go through this learning process together. Again, that safe place being the key phrase for them to be able to come together.

And if we look at this in a cultural perspective, a historical perspective, these are things that were in place for as long as we've been in existence. Men have always had a place to gather, whether that's in the kiva, in the longhouse, or wherever it was, men had the opportunity to come together and have their own space and have their own discussions.

And that's the approach that I look at when developing a fatherhood program is, what are we going to be able to do to provide this type of environment and venue for them to come together to be able to share all of this information or to just share each other, to share stories? So that's really what we're looking at creating.

And so as we know, there aren't a whole lot of programs that are out there that exist for men that aren't focused on domestic violence or substance abuse. And again, this can be a huge deterrent for men willing to participate if they know that this program, particular program is maybe focused on domestic violence. Again, there's that label attached to it. If it's attached to-- or if it's a substance abuse program. Again, more stigma that's added to them as well.

And so if we want to get these men to attend these programs voluntarily, what are some of the things, the strategies that we can look at to make it a little bit more enticing? And when we come to the-- talk about our programmatic part of it, we'll hit on that as well.

So when, again, talking with men and getting them to come to these programs, we have to be very delicate sometimes in how we approach that. If you take, for example, for our men in the audience, when our significant other comes to us and starts off their sentence with we need to talk, we need to have a conversation, immediately maybe your blood pressure goes up. You're like, oh my god. What did I do? What am I in trouble for now kind of thing.

So those kind of words can create barriers and walls immediately. And so when we're talking with men about fatherhood, we have to be strategic in how we come across to them and address them to invite them to these things as well. So we don't want to create those barriers before we even get started with them. So just coming up with ways on how we start to entice men to come to this.

And as your program goes on, you'll also see that the men that are currently involved in the program, if they are buying into it, if they enjoy it, they get a lot out of it, they're the ones that are going to be recruiting other men for you. So eventually over time, that becomes the case.

And those are the men that are coming that are really wanting to be there. They're curious about it. And sometimes maybe it's just them wanting to come and hang out with their buddies for a couple hours. But you get them in, and then that's when they start that process of learning and understanding what the program is about. And then they can start to grow from that. So different strategies, different men. One important thing also to consider is when we're recruiting, when we're looking for men to come to this program, we may put up flyers. We made post things on Facebook that we've got this program. You may say things like we've got free pizza. We've got soda or whatever, things that will draw them in.

But what many programs don't do is when it comes to recruiting don't hit the streets to go out to those places where men are located. So in your community, where do these men congregate? Where do you see them most? Is it at the local store? Is it at a post office? Or maybe even-- I don't know. Some of you may have a bingo hall or something. Where were these men hanging out?

And so those are some of the places that we need to consider going to. And not necessarily going there to hand out flyers and give information to them and say, come to my program. But rather, going in and starting to build those relationships.

Not even coming at it from a program recruitment standpoint, but just going there to get to know these men to build that trust and then talk to them. Have these conversations about the program and what it can do, and then inviting them that way. I think is a great non-threatening way to be able to do that.

Because as we know as Native people, we're all about relationships. We look at the way we introduce ourselves. When we meet somebody, we tell them who we are. We tell them where we're from. We share our clans with them so that they get a sense of who we are, where we come from, and then we go into our conversation. And so we want to take that approach, that same approach when we're talking with and trying to recruit men to come to these programs.

So just things to consider, little tidbits as we go along. But when it comes to our fatherhood program, we really do want to empower these men to play a much-- a more significant role in the lives of their children. But we also want to assist them in becoming healthier individuals emotionally as well, because that is one of the-- I believe one of the major contributing factors to part of their addiction is that inability to maintain healthy relationships.

And so with that, we have to be able to provide that type of education for them as well because unfortunately, many of them didn't grow up observing healthy relationships, so they don't necessarily know what that's supposed to look like, or maybe don't have the skills to be able to maintain or foster those types of healthy relationships.

So those are some of the things that we need to talk about within these programs as well, along with the importance of the role that they play, again, not just in the lives of their children, but within their relationships and even beyond that. The importance of their role within their community.

As Native men, we have certain obligations that we have not only to our families, but to our community as well. And I think we forget about them, because we're so busy just trying to survive. So we have to remember that, OK, well, as a Hopi man, I have this responsibility to do certain things. I need to participate in my ceremony. I need to help certain people.

So those are things that really help and contribute to that empowerment of a man feeling like a man, feeling like he's contributing something as well. So that is a huge-- or a very important part of this journey for them as well, is being able to feel good about themselves.

As we all know, that low self-concept is something that plays into those addictions, substance abuse issues as well too. So that's something that's very important that we should be looking at providing within these fatherhood programs as some sort of training and skill building that addresses that particular area. And also, we want to-- again, as I mentioned, you're building on their skills. How do I as a father engage with my children? Say, for example, if I've been away for even-- maybe it's a month or two, because we know sometimes we have to leave the reservation. We have to go off the reservation to work, to find employment. So we may be gone for a couple of months at a time. When we come back, how do we reintegrate?

Maybe I've done three years in prison and I'm coming out, and I haven't seen my kids in a while. My kids are older now. And how do I reintegrate into the family?

Maybe I've been deployed for a year or two and haven't been home, and I'm coming back home now. How do I get back into this role? So these are things that are very important, because they can be very frightening for some men. I don't know how to do this. And so in your fatherhood programs, you provide that ability or that opportunity for them to practice these skills as well.

That is a very, very important part of having a successful program like this, is being able to allow these men a safe environment, as we mentioned, but also that opportunity to be able to practice these skills amongst other men that they're comfortable with, that they trust.

And these activities are very helpful and can actually be pretty funny at times. You have grown men that are playing out a skit between maybe a father and a son or a daughter, and they're acting out. They're role playing this thing and they're making the other guys in the room laugh. But as you can see, that type of environment that can be fostered in that situation is really amazing, you know? It's a wonderful thing to see these men laughing together.

And then once that skit is done, providing feedback to one another. You could have done this differently. Why did you say this? Or those conversations definitely will help to enhance their ability to maintain the education that they're receiving, to really think about those skills on a little more critical level. And with that, it becomes more ingrained within their memory and they're able to retain that information better.

And on top of that, they're more likely to go back home and attempt to utilize those skills as well as opposed to just giving them a sheet of paper or telling them in class, this is what you need to do. Now go home and do it.

And most likely they're not going to do it because they're afraid. They don't want to be embarrassed. They don't want to mess up. They don't want to look foolish, and so they're not going to try these skills. But if you give them the opportunity to practice beforehand, they're going to be more likely to utilize those skills when they do go home.

So that role playing within the fatherhood programs can be very important also. But as I mentioned, I think even beyond that, just that camaraderie that's built during those times of activities and other things that they're doing in the classes.

Another important aspect of the fatherhood program is the case management part because they will be needing assistance. They'll be needing resources. They may need referrals.

As men grow and explore the emotional side of who they are that maybe has been locked away for years because of the way they grew up-- they grew up without parents. Maybe they grew up in the foster care system. They grew up in the streets and so they've become hardened. They've learned not to trust anybody and they've learned to not show emotion. So once that starts to come out through some of the activities that you may be doing, these men are going to need that assistance. They're going to need somebody to talk to. They may require some therapy at some point as well to deal with some of the past trauma that may be coming out. So these are all things that need to be considered as part of this program, who these stakeholders and partners are going to be to help these men continue to progress as they're going through this journey of finding out who they are and becoming better fathers.

So that's another thing that is very important, the case management part. Who is going to be there for them that is really going to be able to support and advocate for them?

And that is another important thing to consider for your program is that advocacy piece, because many of these men have gone through life without that type of support. They've had a lot of people give up on them, a lot of people refuse to help them maybe because of their past behavior, their reputation, whatever it might be. So these are all things that need to be taken into consideration as, who is going to advocate for these men? Who is going to be there to support them on an ongoing basis?

And again, it goes back to creating this safe environment. That's theirs. It belongs to them. And you'll see through the development of this program, through this process that these men are creating a home within this program for themselves.

And they'll want to attend. They want to keep coming back. And they're going to start to recruit other men, because this is their place, and so that is very important. And it doesn't take long for that to happen as you'll see, once you start to get these programs up and running.

Some different types of approaches. Again, how do we steer away from this program being specifically for substance abuse or addressing domestic violence or whatever other criminal activity might be there? How do we create these things? And once we get that, how do we increase the capabilities and our strengths of the men to be able to transition into this role that they want to be in?

There's a lot of different ways that we can do that. I talked a little bit about already some of the activities that can be done. But obviously, we need a curriculum of some sort, right?

So how do we do that? What curriculum is best? What are some great curriculums? There are more curriculums being developed as we continue to move forward. And there are some that are for native communities or some that are not for native communities. But there's no specific curriculum, like I said, that can fix everything.

So in part of that, we have to consider creating some activities on our own that are specific to the population that we're working with in our community. And that may be integrating some of our own cultural activities into this curriculum, coming up with lesson plans that address specific stories maybe that are ours, that belong to us in this community, specific experiences there.

So these are things that we have to take into consideration as well. What are some of these curriculums out there that we can use? And so if you want more information on those, some examples of curriculum, definitely feel free to reach out to me and I can get those to you here. We won't talk about them here and spend a whole lot of time on them. But we do have to know that these curriculums are an important part of the success of our program too.

And with those curriculums, it's really important to know that we can have a really great curriculum, very solid curriculum that hits a lot of the important areas that we want to focus on within this learning process. But unless we have a facilitator that has bought into this, that is passionate about it, it doesn't always necessarily work. So that is another huge key component to consider when developing your program is, OK, who's going to facilitate this program? Who's going to facilitate these classes on a weekly basis or a monthly basis, however you decide to run your program? But who is that person that's going to be up front? Who's going to be teaching this?

As I mentioned before, many of the men that we're working with, they don't trust anybody already. And so what is it about this particular person that is going to be able to foster and build upon or create that trust with these men to get them to buy in?

And that's really important when it comes to the success of your program is, who is facilitating this? Who is up there sharing this information? And how passionate are they about this? How much do they really buy into the idea of helping men and going that extra mile, advocating for them? That is very important.

So keep that in mind as you're thinking about the design of your program. OK, who is the individual within our office that we are going to assign this to? Or what is the type of person that we need to hire to make sure that this is going to be a successful program that can build the trust of these men? So that is very important.

Another part of that is the activities within that curriculum or added to that curriculum. What are some of the things that you are able to provide for these men?

And we're talking about opportunities again. We're focused on-- because we're talking about supporting men with substance abuse issues. So with substance abuse issues, obviously most likely there's going to be a criminal record of some sort. Maybe a long history of a bad reputation within the community that these men have developed.

So what sort of activities and opportunities can you provide or will you provide that will help to change the community's view of this man, of these men? And some of those things can be very simple.

For example, just about every community, every program, they host community events or they participate in community events. And more often than not, you're going to have an information booth that you might set up at this event.

And typically, it's program staff that are sitting there. They're handing out flyers. They're talking to people that are coming by, telling them about their programs, their different services that they provide. This is a perfect opportunity to allow some of those men to be out there and be the spokespeople for your program.

And it really helps in a two-fold way. Not only is the community now seeing this individual in a positive role, doing something positive in the community, but it really does help to increase that man's confidence and his self-concept, being out there that I'm now the face of this program.

I'm telling them about what we do in the program. I'm enthusiastic about it and I'm telling other guys. Maybe friends I haven't seen for a couple years come by and I'm telling them, hey, you've got to come check out this group. This is what we do. And that's where that passion lies. So what better way to get your message across than by men that are enthusiastic and passionate about what they're doing in this program?

So being able to provide opportunities like that-- again, going back to the role playing. That's a perfect example of an activity that can help to really build those skills within that individual, because they are practicing that.

Then that is something that you can do in many different ways. You can give them a scenario and say-- you can give them a script and they just read it back and forth. In some cases, you can also just give them a topic. For example, giving them topics on maybe things like suicide, teen pregnancy. Maybe the parent just found some drug paraphernalia in the kid's room or backpack. Those can be topics that you can hand out to them and have the men develop their own script. You give them a certain amount of time and say, OK, you guys need to come up with your script and what you're going to act out, and then allow them to-- because now you're teaching additional skills to them as well.

They're going through some critical thinking skills and trying to come up with this skit on who's going to say what kind of thing. And then they act it out. And like I said, some of those things can be very funny. They're very entertaining when you see that.

And then you have that conversation afterwards again. So these are different things that you don't always necessarily find within certain curriculums and things that have to be developed on their own. So just some things to consider when it comes to curriculum and activities that you're going to be providing through your program.

Kevin, we do have a couple of questions. So one question that I'm sure is popping up for people, you said identifying a person that can kind of be a champion or is passionate about this.

What kind of skill set does that person need to have? Do they need to be a trained therapist? Do they need experience facilitating to adopt one of these curriculums? I mean, who plays that role in the system? Could you talk about that a little bit?

Yeah. So when it comes to a facilitator-- and obviously you're going to be doing some introspective work with these men when we're talking about emotions especially. And you can certainly have somebody that is a therapist or a certified counselor, but it doesn't necessarily have to be that because again, we're looking at having resources or partners, other people that we can collaborate with or that we can refer these men to.

And to have a facilitator that is not a licensed therapist or a counselor can be a benefit to you as well, because when it comes time to have to make that referral for the individual, now you have just opened another door for them because now they're going into therapy, which is something they would probably have never done before coming to your program.

So now they're going to go and see a counselor. Once they see a counselor, that may grow into something that becomes a regular thing for them. So they may set up appointments. They may continue to go. So now this man is going and getting the emotional help and support that he needs.

But you will also find that the group in itself, they will counsel one another. They will have those conversations. And they will provide the support. These men will start to grow very close, and they will really be supportive of one another. So to answer your question about the facilitator, no. They don't necessarily have to be a therapist or a counselor.

And your facilitator could be one of the case managers in the office. Maybe they really have a passion for this. And when you do that, especially if your program is based out of, say, a social services department-- social services is usually tied to child protective services as well. Social services departments tend to have a very bad reputation.

But if you have that case manager that is now facilitating this program, these men's ideas are going to start to change about what that office is and who these people are because they're building that relationship with that individual who represents that department. But in that also, that individual at times will have to advocate against his peers for the support of these men.

And that's what I'm talking about when it comes to that passion and true support of these men is they need that champion to really help them get through whatever systems they're trying to get through and accomplish what they want to do.

Thanks. We do have a couple more questions. Would the program need to get a background check on these fathers before they have these events? And then another kind of companion question from another person is, would you suggest background checks on all men?

No. You don't necessarily have to. It really depends on you and what the requirements are for your particular department, your program. You can certainly do that. Now you also have to keep in mind that that will be a deterrent for men as well to come through that. Depending on whether or not-- if they're-- say, again, for example, social services.

Maybe they're required to go to the program because their kids were removed. Now they're working towards reunification. And they maybe have obviously a past criminal history.

Depending on whether or not you're going to have children in there with you guys around, that may be cause for some of those background checks. You may also have information on what their criminal records are. And maybe there is a sex offender that is wanting to come to the program. How do you work with that? And that would really depend on your department and community policies and procedures.

So in certain individuals, you may be required to get those specifications or not be allowed to have that individual attend. But that really is kind of dependent on your particular community and your program. But overall, not necessarily. You don't have to do that unless that's something that you want to do.

And just keep in mind, like I said, it can be a deterrent. Now I have to go and it's like jail. I'm getting a background check and all this stuff. So it really just depends on the individual.

And kind of a companion question to that. What if a father or a male has a violent background? How does the agency include them?

That is-- I mean, realistically if you're thinking about it, just about every man that comes through there has a violent background of some sort, to some extent, right? Maybe they grew up in the rough neighborhood. They were fighting their whole life kind of thing.

So we have to think about what we want as a program. What are we going to-- what is our overall mission? What is our goal? Do we want to help certain men? Do we want to help all men?

And men that have a violent history can definitely be involved in these programs. In the program that we had, we had men coming straight out of prison. We had men with repeated incarcerations within the community. We had gang members. We had ex-gang members. We had rival gang members. They would come and they would congregate and it was fine.

But one of the things that we reminded them of constantly is that when you come through these doors, everything else gets left outside. Once you walk through these doors, the only thing you are is a man. You're a tribal community member, and that's it. If anything gets out of hand, you will be removed.

And that's part of a contract that can be signed at the beginning within their enrollment. I know some programs that do that. They lay down their rules and guidelines and say, this is what you're agreeing to to participate in this program. If you don't adhere to any-- or if you break any of these, then that's grounds for dismissal. You can be ejected from the program.

And especially if they're going to be mandated or required to go there for reunification or something else like that, they're going to make sure that they-- at least hopefully make sure that they are going to adhere by those rules so they don't get kicked out of the program.

So again, going back to the program, it really is up to them to design it how they want to do. But I would not exclude men with violent behaviors because they still have children also, and they love those kids. And if they're wanting to come to the program, there's a reason that they want to come to the program. So why would we push them away?

Because it takes a lot of courage for a man to go and ask for help, and that's essentially what they're doing. If they're coming to your program voluntarily, they want something out of it. And so we should at least be able to give them that little opportunity for that assistance, for that help, for that support.

And like I said, in that environment that you create, you will see that these men will start to regulate themselves. If somebody starts to get out of hand, they will start to speak up with one another.

And what you'll also see that eventually over time, that will expand into the community. They'll start to regulate and support each other outside in the community on a daily basis as well. So just something to consider when it comes to that group of individuals with violent history and things like that. I don't think it's necessarily something that will keep them out of a program.

Thanks, Kevin. And then one final question and I'll let you get back on with your presentation. What ages would be most effective to have participate in a fatherhood program?

To be effective, there is no specific age range. It really depends on the program, again, and going back to the facilitator and the facilitator's ability to integrate everybody that participates. You'll see that primarily you're going to be looking probably from 20 years old to probably 35. That age range is going to be the majority of your participants.

But in the program that we had, we had them as young as 10. We had them all the way up to 65, almost 70 years old all in one group. And in some cases, we had fathers that came with their minor children and participated in this also.

I definitely recommend-- probably 12 years old I think would be the best to start where they really kind of start to grasp some of this stuff and information, but you didn't have a lot of youth in the program. Eventually at some point, we did have some of the foster youth come in that were older.

And it definitely can work to the benefit of the men and the children and the program as well, because now you have these two generations that are learning this information. We are providing this program and this education to the men so that they can pass it on to their children and become better fathers or more involved fathers.

But at that same time if you have youth that are attending, they're learning this information ahead. So they are ahead of the game because most likely, they're learning things that their friends will never learn in their lifetime. So they're hearing things, they're hearing these men talk about the mistakes that they've made, the changes that they would like to make, and the types of men that they want to be.

But then also, you can also see a lot of emotion that takes place within these discussions as well, because when these men really get to talking, sometimes it gets really deep and it does become emotional. And it can be a very healthy thing for these youth to see these men in that state, in that vulnerability, and understand that it's OK to let it go sometimes, and it's OK to let all that hurt and that pain out and to be able to share it with other men.

And they start to see that there's nothing wrong with that. And that's what the men are learning in this process as well. It can be very, very difficult for them.

I'll give you a prime example of that. One of the activities that we developed is an activity called Letter to Dad. And so I would hand our men paper and a pen and just let them know, OK, we're going to take probably about 45 minutes, half an hour, and you're going to write a letter to your dad. And this is an opportunity for you to praise him for the father that he was. It's an opportunity for you to ask all those questions that you were always afraid to ask or maybe never had the opportunity to ask. Maybe you need to cuss him out and say some choice words to him, or whatever it might be. This is your opportunity to do it.

And the only thing that I ask is that you be 100% honest, because he's never going to read this letter unless you choose to give it to him. But he'll never read it, so this is just for you. You write it. Be honest. And just put it all down on paper there.

And so I give them that time. I come back and we have a discussion on it. And the first question is always, was it difficult? And the men who had fathers that were around, they're the first to raise their hand. They say, no. It was easy. My dad was a good dad. And so now you're starting that conversation about the relationships with their father.

And you have some of them that would say, I don't know. I didn't know what to say because my dad, he passed away when I was a kid, or my dad's never been around. I don't know my dad.

And that's usually one of the questions that you may get also is, well, I don't know what to write because I didn't know my dad. And so my response would be, well, you still have questions, and this is an opportunity for you to ask those questions. And so that's how you can get them to write if they never had a father around.

And so we had that conversation. What I didn't tell them in the beginning was that once they were done writing, they would each individually have to get up and share that letter with the group.

And this is where the strength of your facilitator comes in, because you may be sitting there for five, 10, 15 minutes before anybody gets them courage to go up and do that. So they have to be comfortable with that silence to be able to sit there, because you're waiting for a volunteer.

And eventually, one father will get up, and usually use some choice words and say, screw it. I'll do it then. And he gets up and he reads his letter. And then after that, it's easier for other men to get up, and they start to do that.

And so for those men that maybe didn't have a father or had a not-so-healthy relationship with their dad, they start to read those letters. And that's when you start to see that emotion come out. A lot of times they can't make it past the third or fourth sentence before they start to break down.

And these are-- these are men that-- ex-gang members, straight out of prison, tattooed from head to toe. Just big, burly strong men and they're crying like children up there trying to read these letters.

And the powerful thing about that is probably every time that happens, you'll have one or two guys that will stand up and they'll walk up, and they'll stand behind that gentleman as he reads his letter. And they'll put their hand on his back, arm around him, telling him, hey, it's all right. Take your time. We've got you. Those types of things.

And these are the types of activities that really help to create a next level of support and camaraderie between the men in this group. And that's why I say that they start to create this family, this safe environment for them that they call their own because now they've shared something very intimate in there, and they're connected now.

So these are just some of the things that you can do and just how that can be very powerful for these men. And that's, again, what makes it important also to have those collaborations, those partnerships with outside entities, because following that you may have some men, again, that may be triggered. OK, well, how do I deal with that? So after that part of the activity is done, everybody's read their letter, that's one of the times that we will circle the chairs and we'll have a talking circle after that as well and talk about that. How difficult was that? How do you feel now? And then have the men have that dialogue. They take it where it needs to go.

And now that I mentioned that, one other thing I want to bring up too with the strength of your facilitator is that in some situations, there may be nights when you have a father that really starts to talk about something. He starts to share something, and it takes you away from your lesson that night.

Being able to have the flexibility is important because the curriculum obviously is important. There are certain things we want them to learn, certain things we need them to learn.

But again, going back to that idea of it's difficult for a man to ask for help. We need to give him that space when he finally has that courage to come and say something. So when he starts to vent or to share with the group an issue that he's going through, we should give that to him. Allow him to have that space.

And that, again, builds that trust and builds that support for them. Now here's somebody that-- I know I'm in class and I'm taking away from class time, but you know what? They still allow me to speak. They allow me to share what's on my mind. And then I'm receiving feedback from my fellow brothers here in this group. And so that is important as well.

Again, going to the strength of the facilitator is, how flexible am I? How do I support-- and these are just little learning nuggets that over time a facilitator can build up.

Paying attention to these subtle little opportunities that can really help to foster that relationship between the participants and the facilitator, and helps to contribute to the strength of the program. So something just to keep in mind when you're talking about activities and curriculum, role playing-type stuff. There are always opportunities, always learning opportunities in that. And so that's something to consider as you're considering who is going to facilitate this program.

Cultural education I want to talk about as well. It's very important, right? We do want to integrate our cultural practices and teachings into our curriculum as well, or into our activities. So creating things such as a cultural outing, taking the men and their kids out into the wilderness, out to the lake or wherever it might be.

And obviously part of that is having fun, having a good time, but observing the interaction between the parent and the child or children. How are things handled during certain activities?

And then providing them work as well. They should be doing some work. One of the things that we would do is require the men-we give them a list of topics and they would have to discuss three of them with their child or children while they're out doing these activities. And then at night come around the campfire and we would talk about these things. Well, what did you learn?

And these conversations involve the children. So the children got an opportunity to be heard as well. And then that, another time can be very emotional as well because the men now are hearing directly from their kids, maybe some things that they don't like, some things they want to see change. So creating a lot of these powerful situations is really an amazing way to see what these men are capable of doing and the growth that they can get from that as well.

We talked about the community involvement and volunteering. Again, that introspective work was the activity with the Letter to Dad and talking about that. Maybe continuing on counseling for them, sending that referral, getting them into there to talking circles. That's something that is done on an individual-- as an activity itself sometimes as well. And that's, again, going back to the comfortability of your facilitator and being able to sit there in silence, waiting for somebody to speak first because that's one of the situations where it does take some time sometimes for somebody to start that conversation.

Again, allowing your participants to direct that conversation. Not necessarily giving them a topic to talk on, but just say, hey, this is your opportunity to share what's going on in your life. Some of that conversation may start off pretty superficial, but eventually it gets pretty deep pretty quick, as you'll find out. So those are some things there. I'm going to go on to the next slide, Greg, unless there's any more questions.

There is another question, Kevin, about, could the fatherhood program be incorporated into a treatment court or healing to wellness court? And then I have one other question after that for you.

OK. Yes, definitely. And that was one of the wonderful things about this particular fatherhood program is you work collaboratively with other programs, with other entities. It got to the point where the tribal court was referring people or requiring the people that came through court for whatever reason to attend our program, to the point where they were allowing them to utilize the time in our program as their community service requirement as well.

We also had referrals from the state court in Phoenix and Scottsdale and Mesa. Probation-- would allow their probationees, whatever they're called, to attend our program for their community service hours as well. So once that word gets out that you have a great, solid program, these are some of the partnerships that can be done.

You can also-- if it's specifically for those types of courts that you were talking about, that can be done also. It really can be utilized in many different forms for many different purposes.

Thanks, Kevin. And then the other question is-- and I don't know if you're going to get to this, we only have about 25 minutes left-curriculum that's out there. I don't know if you're going to cover some curriculum for people and make some suggestions or you're going to handle that kind of on an as requested basis. If you could just touch on that for the attendees.

Yeah, I mean, I can mention a couple right now. Initially we started off in that program. These are ones that were created for Native American communities by Native Americans. So the one for the Healthy Relationship program came from Native Wellness, I believe. And they do have a training for that curriculum as well. I believe it was a Healthy Relationships curriculum is what it was called.

Nathan Small out of New Mexico has The Good Road to Life. And that is a very activity-oriented curriculum. You also have-- I believe-- what is it? The Fatherhood is Sacred one here out of I think Mesa here.

And then the one that we-- I can't remember. The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum which was developed by-- oh gosh. Some governmental department. I can't remember. But that one's been around for years. And that really integrates a lot of fatherhood activities with other things like financial budgeting, things like that.

So there's a lot of them out there. And we ended up not using one single one. And many of the other fatherhood programs that are around now too, they don't use one specific one. They integrate different things into their curriculum. They may add stuff, they take stuff out.

But again, it's molded to that particular community and the needs of the community. So those are just some examples there. I know there's a lot of other ones out there. There are a lot of other resources that are available. Fathers Incorporated, Kenny Braswell does some great work. You have the National Fatherhood Clearinghouse. It has a bunch of information on there also. So there's a lot of different things that are available. I Googled that, Kevin, just to help you out. It looks like the Administration for Children and Family Services. And then there actually is a home page, fatherhood.gov. And then there's a toolkit, Responsible Fatherhood Toolkit by fatherhood.gov, if that's what you were looking for.

Yeah, the toolkit has some really good information and some activities in there as well, so definitely take a look at that. But as I mentioned before, you can definitely reach out to me for any more specific questions that you might have, and I'd be happy to assist in answering them and finding you some resources for that.

You have fathers that are in the home. You have non-custodial fathers, incarcerated fathers, low-income fathers, stepfathers. So as you build your program, you have to take into consideration obviously the different resources that are available to you.

And what type of fathers are going to need what types of services potentially? So those are things that you want to keep in mind. So like stepfathers, for example, what sort of resources do you think that they may need when it comes to being a stepfather?

They may need some obviously resources to help them, maybe even a separate support group specifically for stepfathers so they can be around that group as well within your programming.

Military fathers. What sort of resources are they going to need? Maybe they are going to need assistance receiving or navigating the military health care system. I mean, things like that that you'll find they will come to your facilitator for. They will ask for help because again, that relationship has been created with that person, so that's who they tend to come to first.

When they need help or they need something, they need assistance, they need information, they're going to go to that person because they trust that person. They know that person. And so that's where I'm going to go.

So just having these ideas of potential resources that are going to be needed. Again, that collaboration with behavioral health, with physical health, the Health and Human Services. Maybe there's a relationship that's created with probation, any resources that they may have there that you don't necessarily provide within your own program.

Maybe it's a relationship with cultural resources. Maybe you have a gentleman that is looking to learn their language. And so that is a tie-in to the cultural resource department there that they may need. Maybe the cultural resource department is the one that's providing the cultural aspect to your curriculum in your program or some of the activities. So those are partnerships that need to be considered when it comes to the different types of men.

One of the ones that you'll find is pretty common is fathers of children with special needs. So what are the resources that are available for them within your area? Who can you connect them with to help them understand what autism is, how to work with their autistic son on the different levels of their ability?

So these are things that will come up. And many of them will be learned as the program grows and matures. And these will be collected over time. So again, just the different types of fathers that you'll be potentially working with within your programs.

And so here we are at the pillars of the program, understanding the ideology behind men's behavior and how it affects their ability to be fathers or to father their children. So with that, we really have to talk about-- we're here in support of men or wanting to help and assist as well men who struggle with substance abuse. And the issue is not just substance abuse, as we all know. There is a history. There are reasons, experiences that lead up to that substance abuse issue that we're seeing now that we're trying to assist with. And in order for that to change or in order for them to be able to change that for themselves, they need to understand why that situation-- their current situation is what it is.

So again, going back to that introspective work, going back to the Letter to Dad, that's part of that process. It's understanding that, wow, I never realized that I had so much pain that I've been carrying around for all these years.

And now I understand that that affects me. That affects me in how I view the world. That affects me in how I interact with all other men, with all other people. It affects the way that I am in my relationships. It affects the way that I parent my children. So that's part of this breadcrumb trail that's leading up to the substance abuse issue. So we have to think about that.

And on top of that, we all know that there is a lot of other trauma that we have experienced and endured as Native people as a whole. And so that is attached to that history as well. That is a contributor to this current behavior that we're looking at.

And we're talking about-- the popular one that comes up a lot is the boarding school era. That has an effect on us today still. So how does that affect us? Those are things that we should be looking at as well.

But I think more importantly, going back even a little further than that and looking at the family system. We were either hunters or we were gatherers, right? We were farmers. We hunted. Whatever we did within our community, that's what we did.

But the family was always there on a daily basis. It was always intact. We went out hunting. We may be gone for a day or two, but most times we're there at night, eating dinner with our family. And that's the way it was for hundreds of years.

And with the modernization of the world, obviously things change. We've got electricity. We've got motor vehicles. We have all these things that have been developed over the years. And with that came the requirements to leave our homes to have to go to find work so that we could keep the lights on, so that we could pay for gas, so we could buy food because we no longer planted our own food or we couldn't plant enough of our own food, whatever it might be.

So you see that progressive removal of men from the home throughout history as the world continued to progress. So you have these modernization things that require men to go to work, so now they're leaving the home. They're not farming. Maybe they get home later for dinner. Maybe they've got-- in our situation like I mentioned earlier, maybe you're having to leave the reservation for months at a time to go work in a city that is far away or maybe even in another state. And so we're not home anymore.

And with that removal, we're not at home for our children. We're not at home for our community. And also, that takes away from our responsibility as community members in our roles in ceremony and activities, in the teaching and passing down of the information.

So that just kind of continued. So we're looking at a complete history of what has happened to our men as time moved on. During war, obviously they went away to war or something like that. And when the men went away to war-- and I'm talking nationally, not just the Native communities.

But overall, when men went overseas to go to fight those wars, there was still a need for workers. And who fulfilled those roles? The women did. So now the women have been removed from the home. And so the kids were having to be left with grandma and grandpa or whatever until mom came home or dad came home. And so you can see just how a lot of this stuff has changed. And that's what makes-- it really kind of brought me to the conclusion through this work of the most important tool in a family to help foster and maintain healthy and strong relationships is a tool-- or is a piece of furniture in our home that more and more gets underutilized every day, and that's our dining room table.

Because when we're sitting at the table, we're talking. We're having conversations. And that's one thing that with everybody being so busy today-- got my kids playing basketball. Another one's playing soccer. Got music lessons, you've got this, that, whatever it might be. We're busy, and so we don't always have that time to do that. So just something to consider when we're talking about that.

And all that is part of that foundation when we talk about the history, is creating that foundation of understanding for them that, you know what? There's a lot of things that play into my behavior, into my decisions. And so helping to understand what all that is, what it contributes, and understanding it so that now I can start to make those positive changes that I want to have for myself.

Obviously, we do want to include still some of the parenting stuff. We want to make sure that I understand maybe the difference between punishment and discipline, the different developmental stages so I'm not yelling and screaming or spanking my child at five years old because they're throwing a tantrum or whatever, not understanding that, you know what?

That child is acting exactly the way they're supposed to act at that age. But if I don't understand that, my reaction may not be as appropriate as it should be if I understood those developmental stages.

Also being able to understand those developmental ages so that I can assist and obtain resources for my child, should I need to. If my child goes undiagnosed, that can create problems for them when they enter school. It just makes things difficult for them. So if I understand those types of things, I can just help them.

And then obviously understanding their adult relationships. How do I do that? How do I communicate? And that goes back to part of that role playing in giving them that opportunity to be able to practice those skills.

Because a lot of things that we ask them to do when we're talking about healthy communication, it's foreign to them. They don't talk like that. I don't ask, you know, what do you mean by that? Tell me a little bit more. These aren't things that they say. This is not the way Native men talk.

So being able to allow them to practice those skills is very important. So we really want to create that strong foundation for them in these areas so that they continue to build this strong home, this strong temple that they are for themselves.

OK. Again, and obviously we want to talk about accountability and responsibility for them as well, understanding that to really take responsibility for the things that I've done, the decisions that I've made. I can't blame the man for everything. That's an easy way to get beyond some of this stuff sometimes for men.

It's like, I am a grown man, helping them to understand that the decisions that I make, the current situation that I'm in is based off the decisions that I made, that I choose to make. And that's part of that emotional growth to an understanding that I need to start--I can start taking responsibility for myself. I don't need to put blame on everything else.

Because I grew up here doesn't mean that I have to be this way that I am today. I can change that. And so that can only come from, again, that strong foundation, a healthier self-concept, and having that support, knowing that I have somebody in my corner that's going to help me and support me in this new way of thinking about myself. And then it's not such a scary thing.

Understanding just how important men are in the family again. And beyond that in a community, how do I contribute back to my community? How do I give back? How do I fulfill my roles and responsibilities?

And then in creating purpose. I said those activities in the community are very important and can be very useful and helpful to the men in their growth, seeing them. And you see that happen in relationships sometimes between the men and law enforcement.

For years, these officers have been arresting this man over and over and over again. Now they see him in a different light. And that is one of the things that I really want to touch on in this segment is that whole ideology or interaction between men and law enforcement.

You know, it's not positive. It never has been. And this is information and teaching that is given to their children. So that's a scary thing when you have children that are growing up seeing this type of behavior, seeing this type of attitude towards law enforcement. And you know, this kid is growing up already with a potential hatred towards law enforcement.

And as they get older, you know-- and we're talking probably pre-teens-- maybe they already have their first contact with law enforcement. And it just starts to grow from there. And I can't tell you how scary that idea is of a child who has no fear or no respect towards authority or anything, and just what they're capable of doing, what that means not only for law enforcement but for the community as well.

So again, working on that relationship between the men in the program and law enforcement, and trying to do things that will help to sort of mend and regrow in a healthier way that relationship with law enforcement, because that's going to be passed down to the kids as well.

Simple things like at your community event, having a tug of war between the men in your group and law enforcement. It's funny. There's a lot of crap talking sometimes because they know each other, but at the end of it they're laughing and they're high-fiving, and it's a wonderful thing.

And these are just simple things that can be done and could definitely create a very positive outcome for the program and the men in the program as well. And obviously, we want to have the men start to develop a more open mind and be open to a lot more things as well.

Areas that you can have these programs. I think it was asked earlier, who owns this program? Well, it really is dependent on the community. It can be held anywhere. It can be a grassroots community program. You have a couple of guys that just start the program themselves, and it's not held in any particular building or office or anything like that.

We've had the program in the Department of Corrections, running parallel with the community program so that when a father was released from jail he went directly into the community program without skipping a beat. You can have that type of program. You can have it in high school for the young men.

It can be a reentry program run similar to that Department of Corrections and Community program. It can be in juvenile detention facilities, treatment centers, group homes.

There's really no limit to where you can do this and who you want to do it. Your curriculum and approach may change slightly depending on where you're at or the age of your audience-type things. But again, that really is up to the program and what they would like to see from it.

So here are some of the barriers, obviously, is your location, right? It might be difficult to start a successful program if your program is being held in a conference room in the Department of Corrections, or maybe it's-- even social services can be a tough place, because that's got a stigma in itself as well. But it really can be held anywhere you want. And so one thing to consider is well also, unfortunately, many of the programs that exist and are out there are held during regular business hours of that department or office. And in this situation, unfortunately, that's not always necessarily the best thing because these men are probably working they're doing things.

So we have to take that into consideration as well. How are we being accessible to these men? Are we being accessible? So maybe that means, OK, we have to run our program from 6:00 to 8:00 in the evening because men are off of work now. They can come in.

But because it's at 6:00, that's around dinnertime, so maybe we need to provide some dinner or snacks for them, because they may be coming straight from work. And in some cases, that will happen. They'll just come straight from work. They're all dusty and dirty, but they're there. And they're probably hungry, so we need to be able to provide some of that for them.

Are we going to have them bring their children? Which is something that I strongly encourage, because men need to take that responsibility as well too. So bring the kids with you, yes.

OK. So now the kids are here. Now we need childcare for them for when we're working with the dads. But they're going to need food too because kids are always hungry. So these are all things that we have to think about as potential barriers.

How are we going to get men to come here? They want to come, but they don't have a vehicle. Are we able to provide transportation? So there's a lot of different things that can get in the way.

And so really kind of looking at it from every angle. I guess sort of creating a SWOT analysis of your program there and its design. What are potentially going to get in the way of us being there? Your venue and all.

When they come to your office, are there images on the wall that depict men in a healthy environment? And it's not just women and children that are on the walls or on the magazines. So the little things like that can have a huge impact as well on the accessibility of your program.

And here's just some of the potential outcomes that we've seen in various programs throughout Indian country. Participants going back to school, getting into a nursing program, graduating, their accomplishment of their intensive outpatient program. Things like these that should be recognized as well because they are milestones for these men.

So again, we're trying to create that supportive environment for them. So if a guy has completed his IOP in class, acknowledge that. Say, hey, great job. And you'll let him know that he's made that accomplishment.

But you will see that you have an increased desire to go back to school because some of these men, quite a few of them, may not have ever finished high school. And so that's something that they want to do, so they're looking at getting a GED.

Again, another thing that we have to be able to provide for them is that resource. OK, this guy wants to get his GED. Where do we go for that? How do we help him do that? These are things that your facilitator/case manager will do for them.

So as you can see, there really is a lot that can be involved in these programs, and there's really no limit as to what can be provided as well. And I know it's a lot and we went through a lot of information really fast. I know that because my mouth is dry now, so I know [LAUGHS] I talked a lot. We shared a lot of information.

But as I said before, if you have any questions, definitely feel free to reach out to me. And I'd be happy to assist with any sort of questions or whatever it might be. So with that, I will hand it back to you, Greg.

Thanks, Kevin. Great presentation. So before we close today, I've got some reminders for the attendees. In closing, we'd like to share brief information on additional training and technical assistance opportunities. NCJTC is a BJA TTA provider focusing on supporting tribal communities and implementing system-wide strategies to address alcohol and substance abuse and related crime.

TTA services include customized training, regional training, conferences, webinars, peer-to-peer support, community planning, tribal justice system collaboration, written resources, sharing grantee best practices, and more. For additional information on general TTA services, links to featured offerings, and to request TTA, please visit our program website as shown on the screen.

Please be sure to also visit the COSSAP Resource Center for a plethora of valuable resources, including funding opportunities, grantee site profiles with a data visualization tool, information about demonstration projects, webinar recordings, and several additional trainings and technical assistance opportunities.

The important COSSAP Resource Center links and information are shown on your screen. And for more information, you can contact COSSAP-- at cossap-- C-O-S-S-A-P-- at iir.com.

For additional information on general TTA services, links to featured offerings, and to request TTAs, please visit our program website as shown on the screen for more information. Finally, watch your inbox and our website for upcoming webinars and virtual TTA opportunities.

This is going to complete our webinar for today. And I want to thank Kevin for a great webinar and a great discussion today. To our attendees, we hope you can join us again for future webinars, and have a wonderful day. Thank you all.