

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) contracted with The Lewin Group to assist eight DHHS-sponsored Responsible Fatherhood Projects with the development of management information systems tailored to the operations of each site. This technical assistance project was designed to assist each site with the development of data forms and a working automated data system to track participant characteristics, services received, outcomes, and costs. The automated system -- referred to in this guidebook as the Responsible Fatherhood Management Information System (RFMIS) -- was designed to operate on Microsoft Access 97. The system was designed so that sites could tailor system components to local program operations and so that sites could adapt the system over time to meet future program needs (i.e., flexible so that sites could add new fields, change form views, and create new report formats in the future).

The data system that is the focus of this manual was developed based on an assessment of needs and capacities of local program sites involved in the DHHS-sponsored demonstration effort. Among the data collection activities involved in developing the system and this guidebook were the following:

- telephone and in-person interviews with DHHS' Administration on Children and Families (ACF) Responsible Fatherhood Projects located in eight states: Colorado, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, California, Wisconsin, Missouri, Maryland, and Washington;
- telephone and in-person interviews with local and national evaluators of Responsible Fatherhood Projects;
- two conferences that brought together representatives of Responsible Fatherhood Projects, local evaluators of Responsible Fatherhood Projects, the national evaluation contractors (Policy Studies, Inc. and the Center for Policy Research), the management information system contractor for the Responsible Fatherhood initiative (The Lewin Group), the management information system contractor for the Ford Foundation's Fragile Family Initiative (Metis Associates, Inc.), and representatives of the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE/DHHS) and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE/DHHS);
- review of the management information system and forms developed for the Parents' Fair Share demonstration (including a site visit to a Parents' Fair Share project); and
- review of existing materials and documents on tracking participant characteristics, participant outcomes, program services, and program costs in Responsible

Fatherhood Projects.

The purpose of this guidebook is to provide each of the eight Responsible Fatherhood Project sites (and other interested responsible fatherhood initiatives) with written documentation on how to complete the RFMIS data forms and operate the automated system. Sections 1-3 of this guidebook are primarily intended for Responsible Fatherhood Project staff who are responsible for interviewing participants and completing forms. These sections include the following:

- **SECTION 1: PARTICIPANT DATA FORMS.** This section provides copies of data forms for use in collecting data from responsible fatherhood participants.
- **SECTION 2: EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED SET OF PARTICIPANT DATA ENTRY FORMS.** This section provides an example of a completed set of data forms for a sample participant.
- **SECTION 3: INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING PARTICIPANT DATA FORMS.** This section provides detailed instructions on how to complete data items on each of the data forms.

The next sections of the guidebook are aimed primarily at project staff responsible for managing and operating the RFMIS. It includes instructions on how to install enter new data records, find and edit existing data records, and generate reports. These sections include the following:

- **SECTION 4: GUIDE TO USING THE RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM.** The RFMIS was developed to operate on Microsoft Access 97. This section provides an overview of how to get started using the data system. It provides step-by-step instructions for getting into and exiting the system, entering data, locating records, and backing up data files. Users may also want to refer to the Microsoft Access 97 manual for more detailed instruction on how to operate the software (especially with respect to creating and generating new report formats).
- **SECTION 5: SAMPLE DATA ENTRY SCREENS.** This section provides a set of completed sample data entry screens.
- **SECTION 6: LIST OF RFMIS DATA FIELDS.** This section identifies the data field names for each data item on the RFMIS data forms.
- **SECTION 7: GUIDE TO GENERATING SAMPLE REPORTS AND DESIGNING NEW REPORTS.** This section provides instructions for generating a series of sample reports on participant characteristics, services received, and outcomes. Microsoft Access 97 has a highly flexible reporting capability that will enable sites to develop their own reports and print out data on any data item in the data system. This section includes instructions on (a) how to

print out pre-formatted reports, (b) some basic guidance on how to create new reports, and (c) examples of reports printed out using sample data.

The Lewin Group is available to provide technical assistance for Responsible Fatherhood Project staff on using the RFMIS and tailoring the data system to the operations of each site. If you should have any questions concerning the data forms, system installation, system design or system operations, do not hesitate to contact:

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