



## At the Center of Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Programs

The federal government has a long-standing commitment to supporting healthy relationships, stable families, and fathers' involvement in the lives of their children and families. Since 2005, Congress has funded \$150 million each year in healthy marriage (HM) and responsible fatherhood (RF) grants. The Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has awarded and overseen three cohorts of these grants.

Both HM and RF grantees strive to support the long-term success of families. HM grantees promote healthy marriage and relationships through eight legislatively authorized activities; RF grantees' legislatively authorized activities support responsible parenting, healthy marriage, and economic stability (see Box 1 for a description of services). OFA works with the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, also within ACF, to conduct research on how to best serve families through these grants.

### Box 1. What are HMRP program services?

HM grantees may use grant funds for eight allowable activities: (1) public advertising campaigns; (2) education in high schools; (3) marriage and relationship education and skills that may include job and career advancement; (4) premarital education; (5) marriage enhancement; (6) divorce reduction; (7) marriage mentoring; and (8) reduction of disincentives to marriage.

RF grantees must offer programs with activities that (1) promote marriage or sustaining marriage (that is, healthy marriage and relationship education); (2) promote responsible parenting; and (3) foster economic stability.

The primary service for both HM and RF grantees is group-based workshops, which typically range from a few days to a few months. Under the 2015 funding opportunity announcement, grantees were also required to offer case management (unless they received an exemption from ACF). In case management, clients receive individualized attention and might receive referrals to other services.

## Box 2. Practice Tips

This brief describes the staffing patterns for 45 HM and 40 RF programs that were funded in 2015. This information is intended to increase the field's understanding of how HMRF programs are staffed, which is critical to program implementation. However, the brief does not assess whether the staffing practices described here are associated with better performance.

For practitioners, when designing and improving your program:

- Identify staff members with levels of education well-suited to their positions. The section, “What levels of education did HMRF staff have?” describes typical levels of education for staff across HM and RF programs, which might be similar to your program.
- Plan for staff training and supervision. The section “How much training and supervision did staff receive?” describes the frequency of staff training and supervision across HM and RF programs.
- Anticipate common staffing challenges and plan solutions. The section on “What staffing implementation challenges did programs face?” provides information across HM and RF grantees that can inform planning.

This snapshot describes program staffing, as well as support for program staffing in the 2015 cohort of HM and RF grantees. Grantee staff is central to successful program operations. Programs must hire and support staff members who further their mission. Yet, even with well-qualified and trained staff, programs can encounter staffing challenges. See Box 2 for practice tips on using the data in this snapshot.

## Methods

This snapshot describes staffing for 45 HM grantees and 40 RF grantees, which received five-year grants in September 2015. Data were from a program operations survey that grantees completed quarterly. The snapshot covers program operations from July 2016 through March 2019, which includes part of the first grant year through half of the fourth grant year (Table 1). An interim report describes a fuller range of findings including client characteristics, the services grantees provide, and the ways that clients have changed from the beginning to the end of the program.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 1.** Data coverage by year and quarter

Grant years included in the data	Quarters included in the data			
	Quarter 1 (October–December)	Quarter 2 (January–March)	Quarter 3 (April–June)	Quarter 4 (July–September)
<b>Grant Year 1</b> (2015–2016)				✓
<b>Grant Year 2</b> (2016–2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Grant Year 3</b> (2017–2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Grant Year 4</b> (2018–2019)	✓	✓		

<sup>1</sup>Avellar, Sarah, Alexandra Stanczyk, Nikki Aikens, Mathew Stange, and Grace Roemer (2020). The 2015 Cohort of Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grantees: Interim Report on Grantee Programs and Clients, OPRE Report 2020-67, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## What levels of education did HMRF staff have?

**Program staff members typically had at least a bachelor's degree.** This was true for facilitators, case managers, and managers/supervisors in both HM and RF grantees (Figure 1). In the first grant year, for example, at least half of the program's facilitators in 73 percent of HM grantees and 65 percent of RF grantees had a bachelor's degree.

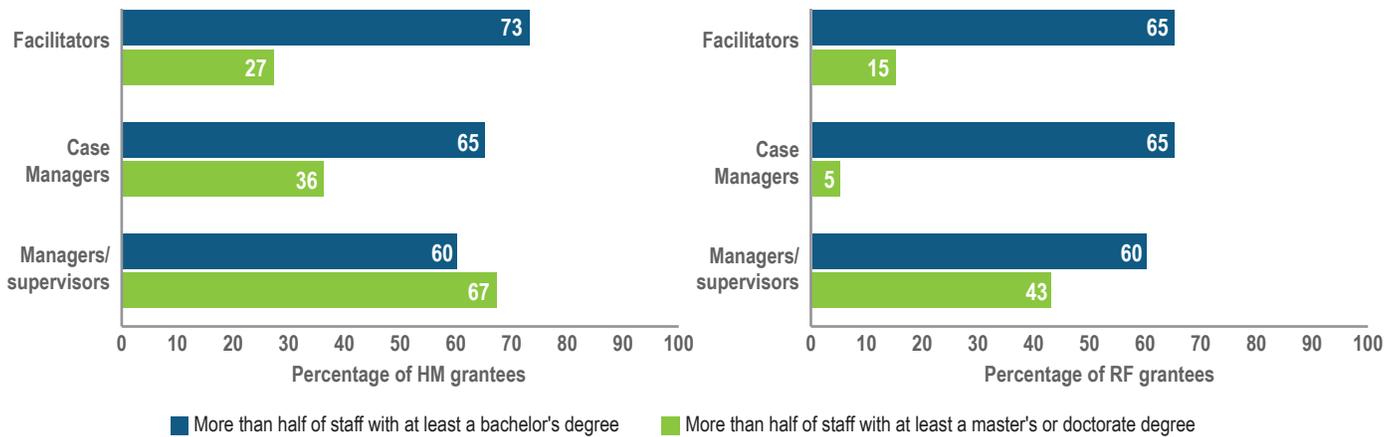
**Staff members were less likely to have advanced degrees, especially in RF grantees.** For example, in the first grant year, 27 percent of HM grantees and 15 percent of RF grantees reported that most of their facilitators had a master's or doctorate degree (Figure 1). Advanced degrees were most common among managers/supervisors. In 67 percent of HM grantees and 43 percent of RF grantees, most

managers/supervisors had an advanced degree in the first grant year.

## How much training and supervision did staff receive?

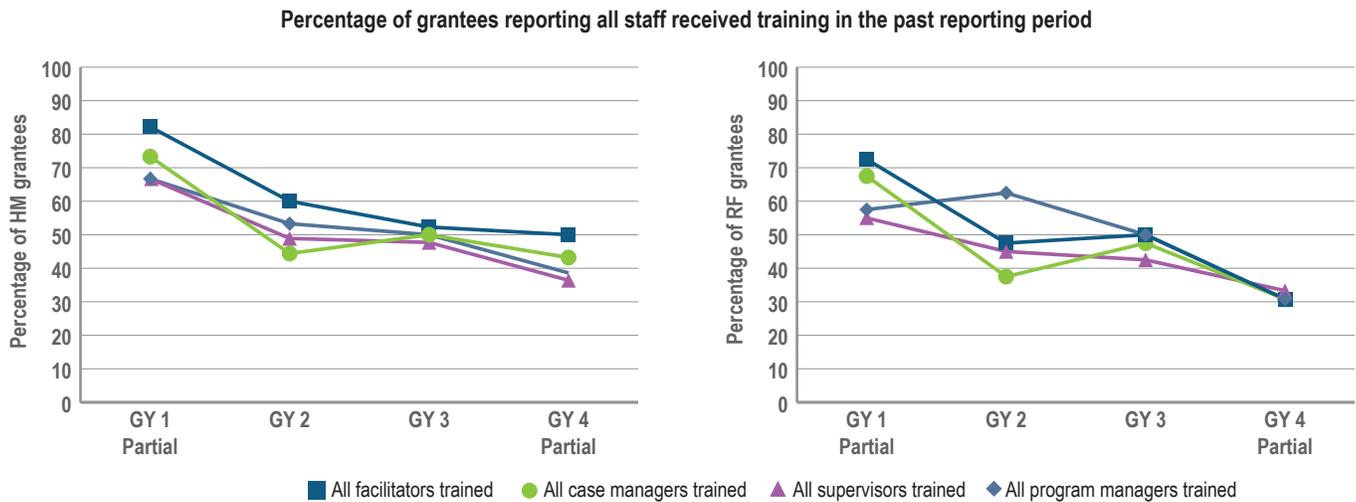
**Initially, most grantees trained staff on the program curriculum, but the share of grantees that reported all program staff had recently been trained declined over time.** In the first grant year, most HM and RF grantees reported that all their facilitators, case managers, supervisors, and program managers had received training on curricula in the past quarter. By the fourth grant year, these percentages had declined for all HM and RF staff (Figure 2). The data cover training only in the previous reporting period (from a quarter to a year), so the pattern might reflect that some grantees initially trained staff and then did not continue training them over time.

**Figure 1.** Grantee staff education in Grant Year 1



Source: Program operations survey, Grant Year 1, Quarter 4.

**Figure 2. HM and RF staff training in program curricula**



Note: GY = Grant Year  
Source: Program operations survey.

**Patterns were similar for other forms of on-the-job training.** By the end of the first grant year, most grantees reported providing on-the-job training to all key staff members, but these proportions declined over time. For example, at the end of the first grant year, 78 percent of HM grantees and 70 percent of RF grantees reported that all case managers had received on-the-job training in the previous quarter. By the fourth grant year, 64 percent of HM grantees and 59 percent of RF grantees reported that all case managers had received on-the-job training in the previous reporting period.

**In both HM and RF programs, staff typically met with their supervisors at least biweekly.** For example, 71 percent of HM grantees and 85 percent of RF grantees reported that case managers met with their supervisors at least weekly or biweekly in the fourth grant year. Patterns were similar across grant years (Table 2).

## What staffing implementation challenges did programs face?

**Staff turnover was generally higher for staff who worked directly with clients than for other staff.**

For example, in the first grant year, 31 percent of HM grantees and 20 percent of RF grantees reported that at least one facilitator had left or been removed from their position in the past quarter (Table 3). Turnover was lower (usually 10 to 15 percent) for supervisors and program managers. Turnover was highest in the years for which we have full data (Grant Years 2 and 3), and lower for years with partial data (Grant Years 1 and 4). The longer the time frame, the more opportunities for turnover, so we cannot determine if patterns of turnover were changing over time.

**Table 2.** Staff supervision

Staff met one-on-one with supervisors weekly or biweekly in the previous reporting period	Grant Year 1: partial (% of grantees)	Grant Year 2 (% of grantees)	Grant Year 3 (% of grantees)	Grant Year 4: partial (% of grantees)
<b>HM grantees</b>				
Facilitators	73	64	57	64
Case managers	78	73	70	71
Supervisors	80	62	70	64
Program managers	80	69	71	71
<b>Total sample size</b> (grantees)	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>RF grantees</b>				
Facilitators	70	75	63	69
Case managers	88	85	78	85
Supervisors	83	80	75	80
Program managers	83	90	70	82
<b>Total sample size</b> (grantees)	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>

Source: Program operations survey.

**Table 3.** Staff turnover

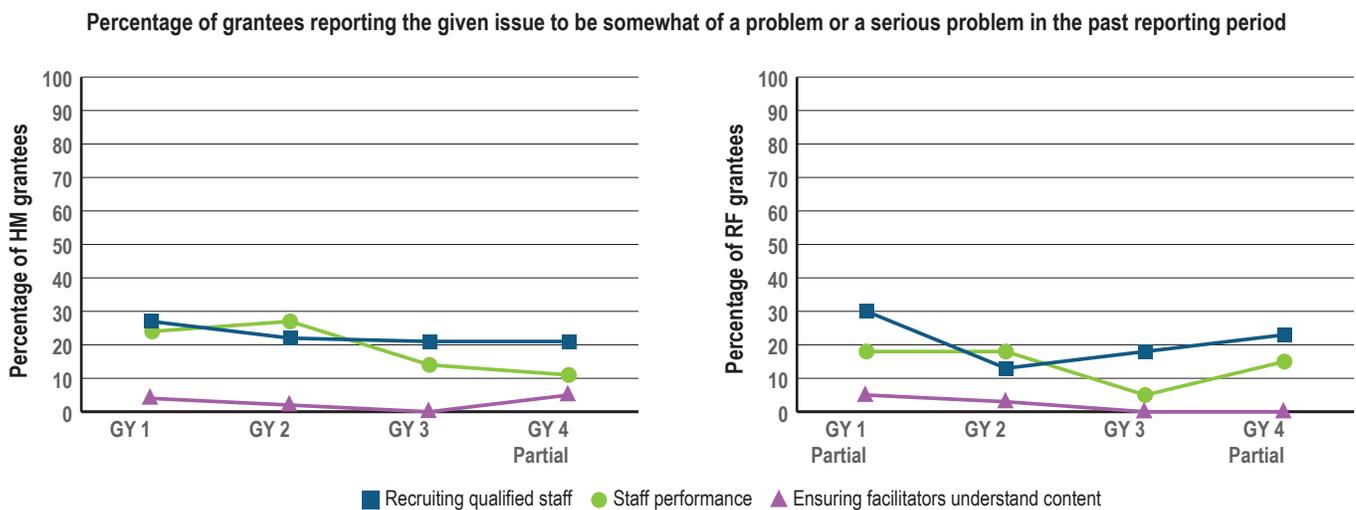
At least one staff member left or was removed from position in the previous reporting period	Grant Year 1: partial (% of grantees)	Grant Year 2 (% of grantees)	Grant Year 3 (% of grantees)	Grant Year 4: partial (% of grantees)
<b>HM grantees</b>				
Facilitators	31	51	55	30
Case managers	22	36	41	30
Supervisors	11	13	14	11
Program managers	11	13	18	11
<b>Total sample size</b> (grantees)	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>RF grantees</b>				
Facilitators	20	28	48	33
Case managers	33	43	58	41
Supervisors	10	15	13	3
Program managers	13	8	15	3
<b>Total sample size</b> (grantees)	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>

Source: Program operations survey.

**Most HM and RF grantees did not report challenges with recruiting staff or staff performance.** The survey included a question to HMRF grantees about how much of a problem three specific staffing issues—recruiting qualified staff, staff performance, and ensuring facilitators understand content—had been for implementation since the previous reporting period. Grantees

rated each issue as not a problem, somewhat of a problem, or a serious problem. At most, 30 percent of grantees reported problems with any of these issues (Figure 3). Recruiting qualified staff was the most commonly reported staffing challenge, cited by 27 percent of HM grantees and 30 percent of RF grantees as somewhat of a problem or a serious problem in the first grant year.

**Figure 3.** Other staffing implementation challenges of HM and RF grantees



Source: Program operations survey

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