

AMTC NEWS



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AMTC & Associates Newsletter

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Strengthening Fathers and Families

Productive. Busy. Exciting. Those are apt words to describe what's happening with AMTC & Associates and with our clients. Just as we conclude one program-year at the end of September, we start anew at the beginning of October. September also ended with fabulous news that AMTC has the privilege to operate the Title V Abstinence Education Grant for the entire state of Illinois (stay tuned for more in a future newsletter).

In all of the hustle and bustle, it's always worthwhile to slow down and reflect. August might seem like a long time ago, but an important and noteworthy event occurred that deserves recognition. Associates from AMTC and several of our clients attended the 2017 Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) Biennial Grantee Conference in Washington, D.C. Our current HMRF clients that participated in the conference were: Family and Workforce Centers of America (FWCA), Fathers' Support Center (FSC) and Milwaukee County Child Support Services (MCCS).

We were among hundreds of individuals that met in our nation's capital to continue our work on HMRF. We learned new insights and applications from main presentations and during break-out sessions. It was a unique opportunity for all of our HMRF clients to come together. In fact, this was the only time during the year when all three of our HMRF clients had an opportunity to meet face-to-face. Our time together allowed us to grow professionally and personally. Individuals were able to not only learn from each other but also to form bonds.

Being surrounded by others who care deeply about HMRF serves as a type of support and validation. During changing times, particularly whenever there is a change in administration we all worry about what is going to happen to funding with the programs that we believe in. What's unique is that family has universal appeal. We started doing this work in 2006 under the Bush Administration. The Obama Administration was equally supportive of these endeavors. It is gratifying to know that our work is valued across the spectrum because it's all about strengthening families.

If there is anything that our AMTC family can do to help your organization, please do not hesitate to let us know.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Angela M. Turner".

Angela Turner, Principal



Angela Turner,
AMTC Principal

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Takeaways from the 2017 Biennial Grantee Conference for Healthy Marriage & Responsible Fatherhood

Close to three hundred people from across the United States converged in Washington D.C. to attend The 2017 Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) Biennial Grantee Conference, August 8th through 10th at the historic Mayflower Hotel. Broadly, HMRF aims to improve the lives of children by strengthening families and by addressing the needs of fathers. Grantees work to improve the social, emotional and financial needs of their participants—to develop and sustain strong relationships and increase economic stability. Ninety-one organizations vested in HMRF were represented at the conference. This included staff members from AMTC & Associates who were there to represent and support their three HMRF clients:

- Family and Workforce Centers of America (FWCA), Healthy Marriage grant serving St. Louis City and St. Louis Counties, Missouri
- Fathers' Support Center (FSC), New Pathways for Fathers and Families grant serving St. Louis City and St. Louis Counties, Missouri
- Milwaukee County Child Support Services (MCCS), New Pathways for Fathers and Families grant serving Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

The theme of the conference was *Paving the Way*, emphasizing that each person plays a vital role in shaping HMRF programming. These initiatives aim to enhance lives, homes and entire communities by implementing the programs to scale (meaning reaching as many people as possible) at various service sites. The conference was sponsored and coordinated by the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It included main sessions for all attendees. In addition, each person who participated in the conference was placed in one of three tracks: leadership, evaluation or data.

Data

Ryan Adomavich, a Senior Evaluation Associate for AMTC, was at the conference to represent the Milwaukee County Child Support Services and to gain more insights into using data. Destini Goodwin, representing Fathers' Support Center (FSC), and Diana Gebben, of Family and Workforce Centers of America (FWCA), were also in the data track. They examined a federally-mandated data reporting system called nFORM which measures family outcomes. Grantees are required to submit program data into this data system to track, measure and analyze their programs' effectiveness.

In one session, the presenter asked those in attendance if they used data daily, weekly or monthly. Adomavich, Goodwin, and Gebben, were among the few who raised their hands for using data on a daily basis. "It made me feel good about where we're at—not that we don't have room for improvement—but I think we're doing a good job with our data and overseeing it well," said Adomavich. Another distinction is that data is not one-size-fits-all. Adomavich noted, for example, that Milwaukee County Child Support Services works with multiple partners, each of whom have their own unique circumstances and various curriculum. Data needs to be utilized in ways that are meaningful and useful for each client.

"The biggest take-away from my particular track was how to balance the fidelity of tracking data with serving customers," noted Gebben, a Performance Measurement Analyst for FWCA. "Although we do need to be flexible, caring and truly listen to the customers' needs, it is also important to meet Office of Family Assistance requirements for data collection. By reporting relevant and timely data in nFORM, we can serve our customers more completely and meaningfully. The best quote from one of the presenters was 'using data for learning is innovative.'"



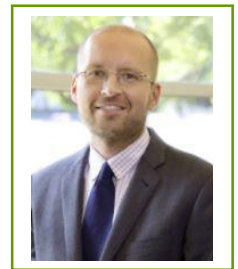
Data



Evaluation



Leadership



**Ryan Adomavich,
Senior Evaluation
Associate for
AMTC**

Evaluation

Two staff members from AMTC were in the evaluation track: Angela Turner, Principal, and Ann Wolter, Senior Evaluation Associate. Turner represented the Milwaukee County Child Support Services (MCCS) while Wolter represented both St. Louis-based clients, FSC and FWCA. Wolter reflected on the conference: “HMRF grantees work with many community partners, including human services, workforce development and other private and public agencies. A big take-away is that each grantee should have a written data collection plan with each of its partners to make sure there is a plan up-front. This includes describing roles for grantee staff and their partners.”



Ann Wolter, Senior Evaluation Associate for AMTC

Turner expounded on these comments. She noted that some grantees get so excited about planning their programs that they might not focus on evaluation with equal enthusiasm. Enthusiasm for developing programs is important but not to the exclusion of evaluation. Evaluation should not just “come with the territory” as a governmental requirement. FSC and FWCA, on the other hand, take data as an integral component. Turner commented, “Ann [Wolter] is in a unique situation with both of her clients, FSC and FWCA, in that they are very enthusiastic at all levels about having their program evaluated. They might have frustrations along the way, but they are invested and excited about the evaluation results.” The conference was a great opportunity for both program experts and evaluators to share their expertise and enthusiasm for evaluation.

Turner and Wolter also spoke to another topic in their evaluation track: fidelity. Federal grants require grantees to use a specified curriculum and to follow certain requirements and uphold methodology. Turner noted the importance of conducting the right amount of fidelity audits, measuring for fidelity while at the same time taking into account small adaptations for programming along the way.

Leadership

AMTC associates are leaders in the field, never settling for “good enough” and intent on serving their clients to the fullest. Not surprisingly, AMTC’s clients are no different. Je’Taunne Richardson is a Program Manager for the Milwaukee County Child Support Services (MCCS) and was in the leadership track. After the conference, Richardson set a goal to visit even more sites in the upcoming year. In addition, “Through our group discussions, we all came back with a commitment to better manage follow-up based on participants’ evaluation.”

Another leader is Halbert Sullivan, the President/CEO of Fathers’ Support Center. Turner affectionately refers to him as one of the “founding fathers of fatherhood.” Sullivan and his colleague at FSC, Eddie McCaskill, were in the leadership track and led a session titled, “Addressing Trauma with Non-Resident Fathers.” The session covered how trauma and adverse childhood experiences impact the population they serve, namely that of low-income fathers. Sullivan and McCaskill discussed best practice models and techniques to address trauma.

“The biggest take-away,” noted Sullivan, “is the importance of assessing the fathers for trauma. The practitioner should understand that when the father is impacted by trauma or traumatic experiences, this can or will affect his choices around parenting, relationships, marriage and employment.” Sullivan emphasized that every effort must be made to provide comprehensive programming for fathers, not just by addressing one or two areas.

Sullivan added, “The majority of the population we serve comes from low income populations, so there are cognitive behavioral ways to change their situation, and that’s very valuable when we look at our population and see the things they deal with every day. There is significant trauma in their world—every day—living in the inner city,



Halbert Sullivan (top) and Eddie McCaskill (bottom), of Fathers’ Support Center, Presenting at the Conference

low income, shooting, gang violence, and that trauma will have an impact and an effect on attitudes and behaviors. What can we do to provide some relief to that person, so there's a value for an organization to provide trauma-informed care."

The Cruise

Associates from AMTC and their clients were certainly hard at work during the conference. Still, AMTC understands that building relationships can happen in different settings. With this in mind, associates from AMTC and the specific clients who they represented at the conference embarked on a dinner cruise. It was a unique opportunity for individuals to bond in-person, given that some of them work in different parts of the country.

"My colleagues and I loved the special honor to be included on the boat trip with AMTC & Associates," commented Diana Gebben, Performance Measurement Analyst for Family and Workforce Centers of America-St. Louis. "The fellowship among AMTC personnel as well as other grantees was invaluable for strengthening those bonds. Some of us on the boat trip had never met before and were able to learn of each of our unique skills and tasks for each of our grants during the dinner and boat ride. Thank you so much, AMTC, for that opportunity!"



(Left to right) **Halbert Sullivan**, CEO of Fathers' Support Center; **Eddie McCaskill**, Family Therapist for Fathers' Support Center; **Cheri Tillis**, Executive VP/COO for Fathers' Support Center; **Destini Goodwin**, Managing Director for Fathers' Support Center; **Sarah Turner**, Angela Turner's Daughter; **Donald Scales**, Healthy Relationship and Marriage Project Director for Family and Workforce Centers of America; **Angela Turner**, Principal of AMTC & Associates; **Je'Taunne Richardson**, Program Manager for Milwaukee County Child Support Services; **Ann Wolter**, Senior Evaluation Associate for AMTC & Associates; **Ryan Adomavich**, Senior Evaluation Associate for AMTC & Associates; and **Paul Wolter**, Ann Wolter's husband