



What is a Father Friendly Flagship Agency (3FA), as defined by The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated (THE COMMISSION)?

A 3FA is an entity (Agency, Institution, or System of Care) that is dedicated to the well-being of children, youth and families, and is committed to the inclusion of fathers in a service delivery model, which has been accredited by *The Strong Families Commission, Incorporated* (THECOMMISSION), headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

More specific, a 3FA can be an education or child and family service provider entity, a children and youth institution for adolescent care, and/or a governmental family policymaking center that frame (s) the delivery of services that impact the lives of children and families, including extended family connections.

The concept of a 3FA evolved (2012-2016) from a Stoneleigh Foundation Senior Fellow Project Initiative titled: “The Integration of Responsible Fatherhood within Foster Care Service Delivery and Other Children and Youth Servicing Systems.” THE COMMISSION itself was established in October 2014, as the sustaining entity emanating from the Stoneleigh Foundation Senior Fellow Project that championed the conversation and built awareness of the value of Responsible Fatherhood in the lives of children and families. **Its mission is simple** – To strengthen families and improve developmental outcomes for children, by promoting greater father family involvement in the lives of both children and families...And, to Intentionally Transform Social Service Agencies and Other Systems of Care to adopt and institutionalize a father inclusive posture, toward men within families. **The vision is clear** – Children and youth in Philadelphia, across the state of Pennsylvania, and around the country will benefit from and grow up with the support of both of their biological parents in a healthy and supportive environment.

What’s required to receive an Initial 3FA Certification?

Since the inception of the Stoneleigh Foundation Fellow’s Project, 35 agencies within metropolitan Philadelphia, with varied service agendas and populations, including one from Trenton, New Jersey, have participated in the continuous design process of the 3FA Initiative. Utilizing Participatory Action Research (P.A.R.) as a research model.

Participating agencies explored and or engaged over time in 12 different strategies to inform their learning as follows:

1. Evidence based learning,
2. Reciprocal knowledge building and exchange,
3. Advocacy,
4. Collaboration,
5. Systems integration,
6. Agency self-assessment,
7. Focus-group learning,
8. Program evaluation,
9. Model development,
10. Responsible fatherhood training and curriculum design,
11. Technical assistance in the form of individual agency consultation for capacity building, and,
12. Strategies for agency system-wide policy and practice change.

The over-arching goal of the 3FA Initial Certification Initiative, has always been the enhancement of child well-being, via the expansion of agency capacity to increase and sustain their ability to involve fathers in the lives of their children, through quality father engagement philosophy, policies, programs, practices, procedures, and protocols, known as THE COMMISSION's (6Ps).

THE COMMISSION's Primary Organizational Transformation Standards for reviewing 3FAs, includes an examination of the following 6Ps.

- **Philosophy** – A statement that establishes the values, beliefs, and guidelines for the way an organization conducts its business and determines its relationship with its stakeholders — employees, customers, shareholders, suppliers, government, and the public at large.
- **Policies** – Written or oral statements designed to influence and determine all major decisions and actions within the organization. Said policies provide the context for all activities that take place within the boundaries set by the organization.
- **Programs** – A collection of resources defined as geared to accomplish a certain major goal or set of goals. A program can be an organization, unit of service, or a system with a set of related measures or activities with a particular long-term aim.
- **Procedures** – The specific methods employed within organizations to express policies in action in the day-to-day operations of service delivery units.
- **Protocols** – A set of rules that describe the standard way an organization prefers to approach a task.
- **Practices** – The behaviors and actions of members of the organization.

Please Note: Depending on the Unit of Transformation, e.g. Agency, Institution or System of Care, the examination order of the 6Ps could change.

In short, to receive an Initial 3FA Certification an entity must:

- Complete a series of IAWF Father Friendly Flagship Agency Self-Assessment Surveys, (not less than two);

- Participate in the Project’s “Community of Learners”, through a Trans-Disciplinary Approach to knowledge building and exchange, including submission of documents for consultation and review;
- Identify and Commence a Capacity Building Initiative, starting with defining the unit of study, anticipated outcomes, proposed activities, and method of independent evaluation;
- Present their Father Integration Strategic Plan to internal and external audiences for feedback;
- Fulfill the requirements of the 3FA Agency Performance Matrix, which among other items required that the agency submit a board approved vision, mission, or some other public statement that undergirds the value and philosophy of the agency that a Father’s love and full involvement in his children’s life is crucial to their health, well-being, and development; and,
- Participate in the Project Exit Interview, designed to assess: 1) increased conversation among members of the public, regarding the value of Fathers in the lives of children and families; 2) early Father inclusion in case planning; 3) agency/client benefits, if any, as a result of participation in the project; 4) short-term effect of project public discourse highlighting the consequences for dependent and delinquent children and youth, who currently are, or are at risk of becoming, involved in multiple systems of care; and 5) new program initiatives, if any, as a result of project participation.

How does an agency become 3FA accredited?

A component of THE COMMISSION’s work is to: a) highlight the outcomes for children who have or had a father present and involved in their life, present but non-involved in their life, or absent from their life all together; b) measure transformation of (Agencies, Institutions, or Systems of Care) ability to adopt and institutionalize a father inclusive posture, toward men within families; and c) to support the implementation of pre-eminent practice standards within agencies, institutions, or systems of care, by encouraging the utilization of evidence based, informed, promising, and emerging best programs and practices, resulting in organizations being certified as having demonstrated levels of research practice. For example a Level One Research Practice is defined as a Promising Practice; Level Two an Emerging Practice; Level Three an Evidence-Informed Practice; or Level Four an Evidence-Based Practice. See the 2020 3FA Accreditation Process Manual at <https://www.thestrongfamiliescommission.com/3fa.html>.

3FAs are expected to play a major role not only in child safety, well-being and permanency, but also in preventing children and family disruption. Where opportunity exists, quick reunification of children preferably with biological parents, including fathers is expected. Kinship care givers, both maternal and paternal, where appropriate should be an alternative option for family reunification. Undergirding the above statement, always should be what is in the best interest of the child & family.

On January 11, 2018 The Free Library of Philadelphia served as host to America’s first accredited group of children, youth and family-focused entities that were accredited as 3FAs (Father Friendly Flagship Agencies). Since the beginning of the project in 2012, 35 agencies within metropolitan Philadelphia, with varied service agendas and populations, including one in Trenton, New Jersey, have participated in the design process of the 3FA Initiative. 25 agencies completed the initial

certification process in April 2016, and 12 agencies were accredited in January 2018, for a two year period.

Accreditation was given based on demonstrated **commitment** to the principals of Father Friendliness & Continued Agency Self-Assessment; **willingness** to engage in pro bono work designed to consider alternative strategies to removing children from their home and extended family members; **readiness** to stand firm in their belief and value of the importance of fathers being included in their respective service delivery models to children and families; and **achievement** of all of the criteria defined for Initial Certification.

The body of work required to satisfy the requirement for 3FA Accreditation was the completion of a Fathers Integration Essay, with model transformation and developed research tools. if any. To assist Participants with producing their essays, informative themes were given as well as questions to guide their report, as follows:

Informative theme:

How you got started

- What was the **initial impact** of the Stoneleigh Foundation Senior Fellow Father Integration Project on your agency?

Informative theme:

Assessment of the helpfulness of the Project Requirements

- **What caused you to remain engaged**, although the project provided no public or financial incentive to do so?

Informative theme:

Evidence of Organizational Transformation and/or System Change

- Ultimately, **how did agency functioning and identity** (Statements of Mission and Vision, etc.) **change**, if at all?

Informative theme:

Examples of Concrete Changes

- **What are the major change(s)** that you have **implemented** within your agency to include greater participation of Fathers in services to children?

Informative theme:

Training

- What **type of training** would have been **helpful to receive**?

Informative theme:

Project Goals Most Contributed To...

- **Which of the 10** Stoneleigh Foundation Senior Fellow Father Integration Project **Goals did your agency most contribute too?** Please Explain. If you feel that your agency contributed to the success of more than one goal, feel free to elaborate.

In closing, describe what you think your project contribution will add to the Fatherhood Field of Study, including what message (s) you would give other-like agencies in your system of care.

2020 (re-accreditation time) proved to be a difficult year for most of mankind throughout the world, including 3FAs who were eligible for 3FA re-accreditation. Unfortunately, the Board of Commissioners on February 17, 2021 made the difficult decision to end the 3FA Project. The decision was based, primarily, but not exclusively, on the detrimental impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Clearly, during the accreditation period, participating agencies were experiencing competing interests that consumed the time necessary to devote to the continuation of the project. Further, the pandemic adversely impacted the anticipated support on the part of the City of Philadelphia and other municipalities. These factors led to the decision to end the project, but not the 3FA work.

The good news for Project Participants is that due to their participation in the 3FA accreditation process, their agency will always own the distinction of having been one of America's Inaugural twelve Father Friendly Flagship Agencies that took on the challenge of intentional inclusion of fathers in their service delivery model, and was accredited provisionally in 2020 by THE COMMISSION, with a Level One Research Practice Classification, defined as "... practice that has demonstrated improved or positive outcomes, as a result of organizational transformation.