

# Counting Couples, Counting Families: Separation, Divorce, & Union Dissolution Panel

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# Themes

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- What Matters for Children?
- What Matters for Informing Policy?



# Challenges in Federal Evaluation Work: Defining Families

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- How do children and youth define families and family structure in surveys?
  - How has this been assessed in household surveys?
  - What measures best capture family status (e.g., legal marriage, cohabitation)?
  - How do we keep track of the family context over time (e.g., separation/divorce)?



# Example: Measuring Family Structure

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- Teen Pregnancy Prevention Replication Study
- Family structure is an important predictor of the risk of early pregnancy; thus, the instrument asks about the parents' living arrangement
- Question: Are there standards for measuring family structure that can be used across federal evaluations?



# Example: Measuring Family Structure

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- *Family Structure Questions from the Baseline Instrument:*
- **The next question is about where you live and who lives with you.**
- Do you live in one home, place, or household all of the time or do you go back and forth between two or more different places?



# Example: Measuring Family Structure

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- 1  Both of my parents live together in one household and they are married to each other
- 2  Both of my parents live together in one household and they are **not** married to each other
- 3  My parents live in different households and are married to each other
- 4  My parents live in different households and are **not** married to each other
- 5  I have only one living parent
- -1  Don't know



# Example: Assessing Parenting Interventions

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- *State of the Science and Practice in Parenting Interventions Across Childhood* project
- Understanding parenting relationships and the contexts in which it is helpful to intervene with parents
- Identifying targets for parenting interventions based on constantly changing living situations and measuring change



# Examples: Complexity

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- Topics: Adoption, children not living with parents
- Creating data strategies





# Informing Policy: Some Dos and Don'ts

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- Strength of data vis a vis strength of claims
- Research expertise vs policy expertise
- Synthesis



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