

Table of Contents	
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
TRENDS IN MARRIAGE	5
MARRIED PEOPLE DO BETTER	5
<b>STATEWIDE COMMISSIONS OR TASK FORCES ON MARRIAGE</b>	<b>5</b>
OKLAHOMA	5
UTAH	5
VIRGINIA	5
<b>CONFERENCES OR SUMMITS ON MARRIAGE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>REMOVING FINANCIAL DISINCENTIVES TO MARRIAGE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>MARRIAGE LICENSE FEES</b>	<b>5</b>
FLORIDA	5
OKLAHOMA	5
MARYLAND	5
MINNESOTA	5
<b>COMMUNITY INITIATIVES</b>	<b>5</b>
THE GREATER GRAND RAPIDS COMMUNITY MARRIAGE POLICY	5
FIRST THINGS FIRST, CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE	5
FAMILIES NORTHWEST 'S COMMUNITY STRATEGIES, WASHINGTON STATE	5
<b>PREMARITAL AND MARRIAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS</b>	<b>5</b>
COUPLE COMMUNICATION	57
DIVORCE BUSTING	58
FAMILY WELLNESS: SURVIVAL SKILLS FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES	58
PAIRS: PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	5
PREP: PREVENTION AND RELATIONSHIP ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM	59
RELATIONSHIP ENHANCEMENT	59
<b>STEPFAMILY &amp; REMARRIAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS</b>	<b>5</b>
STEPPING TOGETHER: SMART STEPS FOR STEPFAMILIES	5
STRENGTHENING YOUR STEPFAMILY	5
<b>PREMARITAL AND MARRIAGE INVENTORIES</b>	<b>5</b>
FOCCUS/REFOCCUS	5
PREPARE/ENRICH	5
RELATE	52
<b>TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD &amp; HOME VISITATION PROGRAMS</b>	<b>5</b>
BECOMING PARENTS PROGRAM	5
MARRIAGE MOMENTS STRENGTHENING YOUR MARRIAGE AS YOU BECOME PARENTS	5
NURSE HOME VISITATION: THE NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM	5
<b>MENTOR AND FAITH-BASED PROGRAMS</b>	<b>5</b>
ASSOCIATION FOR COUPLES IN MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT	55
CARING COUPLES NETWORK	55
CATHOLIC ENGAGED ENCOUNTER	55
MARRIAGE MATTERS OF IOWA	55
MARRIAGE SAVERS/COMMUNITY MARRIAGE POLICIES	26
RECONCILING GOD'S WAY	5

RETROUVAILLE	56
<b>RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND MARRIAGE STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS</b>	<b>5</b>
10 RITES OF PASSAGE PROGRAM, NATIONAL FAMILY LIFE AND EDUCATION CENTER (NFLEC)	5
BOOT CAMP FOR NEW DADS	58
MAD DADS	58
THE INSTITUTE FOR RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND FAMILY REVITALIZATION	59
THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR FATHERING	5
THE NATIONAL FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE	59
<b>MARRIAGE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AND YOUTH GROUPS</b>	<b>5</b>
CONNECTIONS	5
PARTNERS	5
PEERS: PRACTICAL EXERCISES ENRICHING RELATIONSHIP SKILLS	5
The Art of Loving Well	31
<b>ABSTINENCE EDUCATION</b>	<b>5</b>
FAMILIES UNITED TO PREVENT TEEN PREGNANCY	52
HERITAGE COMMUNITY SERVICES	52
MY CHOICE, MY FUTURE	53
RECAPTURING THE VISION	5
TEENS IN CONTROL	54
THE BEST FRIENDS FOUNDATION	54
WAIT (WHY AM I TEMPTED) TRAINING	55
<b>DIVORCE EDUCATION AND MEDIATION</b>	<b>56</b>
BEFORE YOU DIVORCE	56
THE MICHIGAN MEDIATION PROJECT	56
<b>ADDITIONAL MARRIAGE EDUCATION RESOURCES</b>	<b>57</b>
THE COALITION FOR MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND COUPLES EDUCATION	57
FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICES	57
MARRIAGE BUILDERS, INC.	57
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	<b>58</b>
CONTACTS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION	38
ACF CONTACT INFORMATION	52
AGENDA FROM OKLAHOMA GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON MARRIAGE	53
AGENDA FROM OKLAHOMA TRAINING FOR TANF CASEWORKERS	55

## Introduction

An overwhelming majority of Americans still aspire to be happily married, yet more than three decades of high divorce rates, changes in social norms, and changes in the structure and organization of families make this goal seem difficult for many to achieve. In the wake of these changes, a new consensus is emerging among academic researchers, policymakers and advocates. This consensus finds that children fare best when raised in a stable marriage by their two biological parents. Furthermore, marriage benefits not only children, but adults and communities as well. Recognizing not only changing social forces but also the enduring benefits of marriage, state and local governments, faith-based institutions, non-profit organizations and businesses are developing innovative approaches to promoting safe and stable marriages. These approaches range from changing welfare rules to developing marriage education programs to community organizing and media and education campaigns. This document provides a brief overview of some of these approaches and is intended to serve as a resource guide for people interested in promoting healthy marriages and vibrant families.

## Trends in Marriage

Over the last several decades, marriage has declined, while cohabitation and unmarried childbearing have increased.

- From 1970 to 1996 the marriage rate fell by a third, from 77 to 50 marriages per 1,000 unmarried women. Similarly, from 1960 to 2000 the proportion of married adults declined by one fifth, from 70 percent to 58 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- From 1960 to 1998 the number of unmarried, cohabiting couples increased nearly tenfold, from 439,000 to 4.2 million.<sup>2</sup>
- From 1960 to 1980 the divorce rate rose from 9 to 23 per 1,000 married couples before declining slightly and remaining steady at 20 per 1,000 through 1998.<sup>3</sup>
- From 1970 to 1994 births to unmarried women increased from 11 to 33 percent of all births, then leveled off through 1999.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of these trends, Americans still hold marriage in high regard. Ninety-three percent of Americans rate having a happy marriage as an important goal.<sup>5</sup> The Census Bureau projects that

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998*, p. 111, Table 156; and *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1986*, page 79, Table 124. and, National Marriage Project. *State of Our Unions: The Social Health of Marriage in America*. National Marriage Project, Piscataway, NJ: June 2001. p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *State of Our Unions*. June 2001. p.24.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1998*, p. 111, Table 156; and *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1972*, p. 63, Table 86; and National Vital Statistics Reports, August 19, 1998. Quoted in *State of Our Unions*. June 2001. p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Terry-Humen, E., Manlove, J., and Moore, K. *Births Outside of Marriage: Perceptions and Reality*. Child Trends Research Brief. Child Trends, Washington, D.C.: April 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Waite, L.J. and Gallagher, M. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. Doubleday: New York, 2000.

ninety percent of Americans will eventually marry. Of those that divorce, the majority remarry – typically within three years.<sup>6</sup>

### Married People Do Better

Research from the fields of sociology, economics, medicine, and psychology has found a strong association between marriage and a host of benefits for men, women, and children. The benefits for both women and men include:

- lower mortality rates,
- lower rates of chronic illnesses or disabilities,
- higher ratings of one's own health,
- less depression, anxiety, and suicide,
- less problem drinking and substance abuse,
- greater financial well-being, and
- lower rates of intimate partner violence.

For children, growing up with married parents is associated with:

- better physical and mental health,
- less physical, emotional and sexual child abuse,
- more education,
- less criminal behavior,
- fewer conduct disorders,
- more stable marriages in adulthood, and
- more career success in adulthood.<sup>7</sup>

While these better outcomes may not be entirely attributable to marriage, neither can they be entirely explained away by selection effects: the theory that people with greater advantages – for example, happier, healthier, or wealthier people – are more likely to marry and stay married.

It is also important to note that these better outcomes do not accompany cohabitation. Cohabiting relationships are far less stable than marriages. Cohabitators experience less emotional and financial success and higher rates of domestic violence. In general, cohabitators are less happy than married people, and children living with cohabiting couples have more behavior problems and lower academic performance than children in married-couple families. Moreover, marriages following cohabitation are more likely to end in divorce than marriages not preceded by cohabitation. This is especially true when there is a series of cohabitations.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Kreider, Rose M., and Jason M. Fields, *Number, Timing, and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: 1996*, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, February 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Waite and Gallagher, 2000.

<sup>8</sup>Popenoe, David and Barbara Dafoe Whithead, *Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know About Cohabitation Before Marriage*, The National Marriage Project, Rutgers, New Jersey, January 1999.

<marriage.rutgers.edu>

Second and subsequent marriages do not provide the benefits to children of intact first marriages. On most measures, children do better in intact first marriages than remarriages.<sup>9</sup> There is a clear need to improve stepfamily functioning, prevent divorce, increase stability, and improve the odds for child well-being.

One way to improve outcomes for children and their families is by educating the public about the benefits of marriage and ways to promote and strengthen healthy marriages. This compendium provides examples of available programs. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, and inclusion does not signify endorsement of a particular approach or intervention. Instead, this document is intended to encourage state, local and community leaders to think creatively and act collaboratively to promote healthy marriages. The approaches in this volume range from statewide policy changes and initiatives to local community actions to couple-to-couple interventions. Some programs were developed by academics based on theory and research, others by marriage and family therapists based on research and practice. Still others grew from grassroots efforts in congregations, community centers, court systems and fatherhood programs. Most programs have not been evaluated extensively. Each program is described with a brief sketch including its purpose and operations, primarily based on materials provided by the programs themselves. Contact information for each program is provided at the end of the document.

---

<sup>9</sup> Cherlin, Andrew and Frank F. Furstenburg, Jr., "Stepfamilies in the United States: A Reconsideration," *Annual Review of Sociology* 20: 359-381, 1994 and Emery, Robert E., *Marriage, Divorce, and Children's Adjustment*, Second Edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, 1999, cited in Cherlin, Andrew J., and Paula Fomby, "A Closer Look at Changes in Children's Living Arrangements in Low-Income Families," *Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three-City Study*, Working Paper 02-01, February 20, 2002.

## Statewide Commissions or Task Forces on Marriage

### Oklahoma

In January 1999, Governor Frank Keating laid out a series of social goals including a commitment to reducing divorce rates by one third by 2010. Oklahoma's divorce rate, the second highest in the nation, was believed to have serious economic consequences for children, adults, and the state's economy. In February, the Governor and the First Lady hosted a Conference on Marriage that launched the Governor's Statewide Marriage Initiative. From the outset, it was planned to be a multi-sector initiative including the religious community, businesses, government, legal institutions, health and social service providers, universities, and the media. The first year involved leaders from these different organizational perspectives developing action plans that encompassed a broad spectrum of activities across the state.

A year later, in March 2000, the Governor announced his decision to set aside \$10 million of unspent TANF funds for use in strengthening marriage and reduce divorce rates. The TANF funds will be used primarily, but not exclusively, to target services for low-income populations at greatest risk of marital instability and for whom few services are available.

Since that time, the Oklahoma marriage initiative (OMI) has become a statewide effort to promote marriage, reduce divorce, and lower the number of children born out of wedlock. The three primary components of the OMI are developing a statewide baseline survey, creating a statewide Marriage and Relationship Education Service Delivery System, and developing county-based strategies through faith-based leaders and organizations.

#### *Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Statewide Baseline Survey*

In partnership with Oklahoma State University's Bureau for Social Research, the OMI designed and completed the first state-of-the-art, comprehensive statewide marriage survey. Residents of neighboring states were also surveyed, to form a comparison group. Preliminary findings include:

- A large majority of Oklahoma adults (82%) feel a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce would be a "good" or "very good" idea.
- A majority of both currently married and romantically involved Oklahomans (65%) said they would consider relationship education to strengthen their relationships.
- Over two-thirds of Oklahoma adults (69%) think divorce is a very serious national problem.

#### *Statewide Marriage and Relationship Education Service Delivery System*

A statewide Marriage and Relationship Service Delivery system has been created to deliver skills-based and research-based relationship education services to couples, both married and unmarried. Using the existing government and community infrastructure of health, human service and cooperative extension staff. A three-tier training model was developed:

- **State Leader Orientation:** 400 public agency administrators, supervisors, workers and university personnel received a one-day orientation on the Marriage Initiative, services and relationship training.
- **Gatekeeper Training:** All frontline staff in the seven pilot counties will receive a one-day, general information and orientation session. Key health, human service and cooperative extension caseworkers will participate in a two-day skills development institute, with a focus on how to refer couples to services.
- **Core Curricula (PREP) Training:** As part of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, TANF caseworkers are receiving marriage education. Clients specifically targeted include low-income disadvantaged single mothers, high-risk new parents, pre-marital and unmarried couples in significant relationships, and married couples. Based on the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) curriculum, the training will be adapted for a diverse audience and delivered through either a religious or a secular track. Visiting nurses, mental health and cooperative extension professionals who will provide the relationship training will receive multi-day training in the core curricula, including didactic, skills training and practice, and discussion of implementation issues. A curriculum advisory group will seek to make the sessions helpful and relevant for various populations, including mothers receiving welfare.

Included as an attachment is the agenda and schedule used in Oklahoma to train caseworkers.

#### *Involvement of faith leaders in county-based teams and strategies*

Knowing that 75% of first marriages occur in a church setting, and that 67% of Oklahomans claim affiliation with a church, the Governor invited faith leaders to join in this Initiative. In 2000, the leaders of almost every denomination and faith throughout Oklahoma joined the Governor and First Lady at the State Capitol to pledge their commitment to work toward preparing couples for the complexities of marriage. These leaders signed a marriage covenant, committing to encourage more pre-marital counseling/education, enact waiting periods before marriage, and develop marriage mentors within their congregations. To date 800 faith leaders in 66 of the state's 77 counties have signed that covenant. These faith leaders are joining with DHS, other agencies, private providers, and others to implement county-based strategies for strengthening marriage.

#### Utah

On September 18, 1998, Utah formed the first state-wide Commission on Marriage. Governor Mike Leavitt and First Lady Jacalyn S. Leavitt announced the formation of the Governor's Commission to focus attention on strengthening marriages in Utah. The commission was charged with gathering information, studying the best marriage-strengthening practices in the country, and recommending to the governor and the first lady actions that should be taken in Utah.

The Governor's Commission held a series of annual conferences on topics such as managing differences in relationships, fulfilling marital intimacy, dealing with in-laws, and managing

finances. Speakers at the annual conferences have included former Brigham Young University Football Coach Lavell Edwards, Dr. John Gray, and author Dr. Stephen Covey.

In the fall of 2000, the Utah Department of Workforce Services awarded the Commission \$600,000 for four specific projects towards fulfillment of TANF purpose number 4 – encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. The funded projects include:

- a pilot project for engaged couples,
- a pilot project directed at low-income families, newlyweds, second marriages, and cohabiting couples,
- expanded outreach services by Utah State University Extension Service, and,
- continuing and promoting of yearly marriage conferences.

Funding for the approved projects began in April 2001 and runs until September 30, 2003.

### Virginia

Virginia's Partners in Prevention program, begun in FY 1998, receives \$1 million from TANF each year. The program educates young adults and teenagers on the benefits of waiting until marriage to conceive a child to ensure healthy, happy families. Strategies include media campaigns, direct intervention, and public forums. The goal of Partners in Prevention is to reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock births in Virginia, while also reducing the incidence of abortion.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) sets general policy parameters and then allows local coalitions the flexibility to design the precise delivery of services to meet the needs of their own communities. In fiscal years 2000-2002, 18 coalitions, representing 48 cities and counties, received funding. VDH requests applicants to focus on areas such as:

- discouraging high-risk sexual behavior,
- delaying sexual involvement until marriage,
- discouraging cohabitation outside marriage,
- encouraging marriage before conception, and
- encouraging male responsibility.

Partners in Prevention works in cooperation with such initiatives as the Virginia Abstinence Education Initiative, the Virginia Fatherhood Campaign, and the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative.

## Conferences or Summits on Marriage

To address concerns over high levels of divorce or out of wedlock births, governors and state legislatures convened statewide conferences and summits on marriage. In Oklahoma, a conference launched a statewide Marriage Initiative (see above). Governors in both Utah and Arkansas sponsor annual marriage summits to promote creative policies to encourage, reinforce, and strengthen marriage. Materials are included in the appendix.

Topics and speakers featured at the Oklahoma and Utah conferences include:

- “Why is marriage important to a society? Does marriage matter? How does marriage affect all citizens?” (Patrick Fagan, The Heritage Foundation, Washington DC)
- “Trends in divorce in Oklahoma” (Belinda Biscoe, The University of Oklahoma)
- “What can we do to promote marriage as an institution through public policy? How do we effectively put marriage on the public agenda?” (Theodora Ooms, Center for Law and Social Policy, Washington DC)
- “Can marriage as an institution be restored? Can communities be re-built through relationships? Where is the hope?” (David Ferguson, Intimate Life Ministries, Austin, Texas)
- “In-law relationships: areas of success and difficulty”
- “Elements of fulfilling marital intimacy”
- “Romance after parenthood: practical and fun ideas on how to support marriage from tots to teenagers.”

## Removing Financial Disincentives to Marriage

A number of states have reduced financial disincentives to marriage through changes in Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), child support, or other program rules. Such changes have included removing restrictions on TANF eligibility for two-parent families, eliminating marriage penalties in calculating TANF benefit amounts, and suspending child support arrearage collections for non-custodial parents who marry the custodial parent of their children. Under the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, two-parent families were subject to eligibility restrictions that did not apply to single-parent families. For example, two-parent families working more than 100 hours per month were not eligible for AFDC, nor were parents who had not worked in 6 of the last 13 quarters.

Only 10 states still restrict eligibility for two-parent families:

- Pennsylvania
- District of Columbia
- Indiana
- South Dakota
- New Hampshire
- Kentucky
- Mississippi
- Arizona
- California
- Maine

Examples of changes to remove financial disincentives to marriage include:

- Alabama disregards the earned income of new or reconciling spouses for three months.
- In Maine, stepparents of TANF children have the option to be included or excluded from the TANF program. Families select the option that is most advantageous for them.
- In Minnesota, stepparents are required to be included as eligible members in a TANF assistance unit.
- Mississippi disregards the income of a stepparent in determining a household's eligibility for welfare in the first six months after a couple marries.
- Three tribal TANF programs in California (Owens Valley Coalition, Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association, and Torres Martinez Coalition) provide a one-time bonus of \$2,000 to recipients who marry.
- In West Virginia, married couples receive an increase in TANF benefits of \$100 per month.
- Since 1992, New Jersey has excluded a non-needy stepparent's income in computing a grant, provided the household income does not exceed 150 percent of poverty.
- After marriage, North Dakota disregards the income of a stepparent for six months in determining TANF eligibility and benefits.
- To promote marriage and provide a more secure and stable family situation, Oklahoma allows an adjustment period up to three months of the existing TANF benefit to be approved. The intent is to assist the family pay outstanding bills and gradually assume financial responsibilities. Receipt of an adjustment period counts toward the 60-month lifetime limit of

receipt of TANF. Income must be considered available to the TANF assistance unit of any non-relative adult(s) of the opposite sex not receiving TANF who live(s) in the home with the natural or adoptive parent. However, certain income exemptions are not applicable. If information necessary to determine income eligibility is not provided, the application is denied or the cash assistance terminated. Tennessee disregards the income of a stepparent in determining TANF eligibility if it is below 185 percent of the need standard for the household, including the stepparent.

- Tennessee also suspends child support arrearage collections when a non-custodial parent marries the custodial parent of his or her children.

## Marriage License Fees

Several states encourage premarital education by reducing the marriage license fee for couples who take a marriage education course and increasing the wait for a license for those that don't.

### Florida

Finding that “the state has a compelling interest in educating its citizens with regard to marriage and, if contemplated, the effects of divorce,” the Florida legislature passed the nation’s first marriage education legislation, The Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act of 1998. The law provides a discount on marriage license fees to couples who take a skills-based marriage education course. Couples completing at least four hours of premarital skills education receive a \$32.50 reduction, paying \$55.50 instead of \$88 for their marriage license. They may also marry the same day. Those who have not taken the four-hour course must wait three days for their license. The law stipulates that the course must have been taken no more than one year prior to application date and that a certificate of completion must be filed with the application for a marriage license. Providers must be qualified instructors such as licensed psychologists, licensed clinical social workers, licensed marriage and family therapists, licensed mental health counselors, official representatives of a religious institution with relevant training, or any qualified provider designated by the judicial circuit. The law also mandates skill-based marriage education instruction in high school and divorce education classes for all divorcing couples with minor children.

### Oklahoma

In 1999, Oklahoma passed legislation to reduce marriage license fees from \$25 to \$5 for couples who can produce a letter or certificate documenting that they have taken a marriage preparation course. The course and provider requirements are not defined.

### Maryland

In 2001, Maryland passed legislation modeled on the Florida legislation that requires a minimum of four hours of marriage education and a certificate of completion for the reduced fees with the same provider guidelines as Florida. However, the Maryland legislation gives counties discretion to determine marriage license fees reductions, if any, rather than the state setting the fee reduction across the board.

### Minnesota

In 2001, Minnesota passed legislation reducing the marriage license fee from \$70 to \$20 for couples who complete at least 12 hours of premarital education provided by a licensed or ordained minister, a person authorized to solemnize marriages, or a person licensed to practice marriage and family therapy. Minnesota’s law also requires the couples to take a “premarital inventory” to assess their marital compatibility and stipulates that the premarital preparation will include instruction in communication and conflict management skills.

Legislators in Illinois, Iowa, Virginia, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas have introduced similar legislation.

## Community Initiatives

### The Greater Grand Rapids Community Marriage Policy

Established in 1997, the Greater Grand Rapids Community Marriage Policy (GGRCMP) initiative was created to elevate the status of marriage as the preferred context to raise children in the communities surrounding Grand Rapids.

The initiative expands the model developed by Marriage Savers and calls on the entire community including business, civic, health, minority, and professional leaders to actively support marriage. The initiative focuses on strategies to raise awareness about the benefits of marriage and provides resources for couples to effectively strengthen their marriages. In this way, the community fosters an environment with the greatest likelihood of ensuring the well-being of its members, especially its children.

In the Grand Rapids' model, a community marriage policy is a set of agreed upon guidelines for premarital preparation and community support for marriage to which clergy, congregations, and the community voluntarily commit.

The heart of the GGRCMP initiative:

- Encourages courtship of at least one year;
- Promotes chastity outside of marriage and faithful marital relationships;
- Expects a thorough premarital preparation process of at least four counseling sessions (or equivalent) utilizing religious instruction, premarital inventories, and intensive education;
- Encourages enrichment events to strengthen marriages, and intervention services for stressed marriages;
- Trains married couples as mentors to the engaged, newlyweds, or those experiencing marital difficulties; and,
- Encourages cooperation among congregations and organizations to share resources and to create a positive climate in which all marriages are helped to succeed.

### First Things First, Chattanooga, Tennessee

This community-based, secular, nonprofit initiative founded in 1997 is dedicated to strengthening families through education, collaboration, and mobilization. The program

- advocates strong, healthy, lifelong marriage,
- promotes the importance of both mothers and fathers in the lives of their children, and
- works to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

First Things First (FTF) builds bridges between sacred and secular, public and private, and works with a wide array of partners including government, places of worship, social service agencies, the private sector, media, and private citizens. It builds on common concerns shared by people of all faiths, races, and economic groups. FTF has become a resource for the media on family issues by providing information and story ideas an ongoing basis. The mayor, the county executive, and

community leaders participated in organization events and news conferences. FTF purchases television time for media campaigns, maintains a website, and issues a monthly electronic newsletter.

FTF began by recruiting volunteers and potential supporters who were friends of board or staff, community leaders, church leaders, or leaders in civic organizations. The organization uses volunteers in many ways, for example, as judges for FTF's annual Father of the Year Essay Contest, and assisting at public events. FTF trains marriage mentors at churches and produces a Marriage and Family Resource Manual for area church leaders.

Collaborating with Agencies and Institutional Partners. FTF partnerships have included:

- organizing a divorce education and mediation pilot for the county courts,
- working with the schools to launch an annual Father of the Year Essay Contest,
- sharing program ideas and resources with faith-based institutions,
- involving city and county officials in FTF activities,
- working with local business organizations to focus on family-friendly workplace policies, for example through recognizing a family-friendly business of the year,
- partnering with the county medical society to publish a guide to help parents talk to their kids about sex, and
- offering technical assistance to early childhood development programs on how to incorporate fathering material into their curricula.

#### Families Northwest's Community Strategies, Washington State

This long-term campaign to create a framework for communities to build healthy environments for marriage and families is focused on making Washington the state with the highest marriage rate and lowest divorce rate. Families Northwest's activities include:

- unifying clergy, business leaders, government officials, civic leaders, judges, educators, counselors, youth workers and the public to build a foundation to support marriage and strengthen families.
- equipping leaders (clergy, counselors, youth workers, church leaders, etc.) to meet the diverse relational needs and issues of couples, families, individuals, and young people.
- facilitating strategy sessions among community leaders to evaluate community needs, determine current services, and develop plans to strengthen the relational health of the community.
- creating and consulting with local leadership teams to further network the community, leverage local resources, and develop necessary services to increase the success rate and overall health of marriages and families.
- embarking on a ten-year public campaign to educate, inform, empower, and equip leaders and the general public in the importance of marriage (The Northwest Marriage Movement) that includes media efforts, statewide participatory initiatives, targeted legislative efforts, and educational training.

## **Premarital and Marriage Education Programs**

Marriage education is a research-based approach that teaches couples how to build and maintain healthy, stable marriages and handle marital distress and breakdown. Research has found successful and unsuccessful couples to have the same level of disagreement and to disagree about the same basic issues – money, kids, sex, other people, and time. The difference between a happy, healthy marriage and one that is not is tied to how the couple understands and accepts inevitable disagreements and how they handle them.

Researchers have identified the behaviors – or practices - that predict success and developed educational courses and programs to enable couples to learn how to handle differences successfully. Along with skills for communicating more effectively, managing conflict, and working together as a team, the courses also typically teach the benefits of marriage for couples and their children. Some programs, adapted for particular populations, include information specific to stepfamilies, first-time parents, and couples dealing with substance abuse, violence, financial difficulties, chronic illness, parenting adolescents, and sexual issues.

Although programs range from several hours to semester-long courses; most are 8 to 20 hours long and delivered either over a weekend or one night a week for six weeks. Programs are delivered in classroom settings in community health centers, childbirth clinics, churches, courts, prisons, extension agencies, schools, and military bases. There are a small number of on-line courses and many other resources, such as books and videotapes.

Marriage Education courses can be taught by trained para-professionals, lay leaders, teachers, clergy, or mental health professionals. Leader training typically takes one to three days. Some courses require no training and are ready to teach “out of the box.” Most courses are most effective when taught in a classroom-type setting. Research to date has found that couples learn the skills as well, if not better, in groups than in the more expensive, labor intensive one-trainer/counselor-to-one-couple model. These courses should not be confused with marriage therapy or counseling. Couples don’t share personal issues or feelings in the classroom or with the group. The classroom is used to teach couples the skills but they practice new skills in private. One advantage of marriage education is that the skills are beneficial for couples at any point in a relationship. Couples preparing for marriage, newlyweds, long-married, and troubled couples can all benefit. As a result, the courses can be adapted for special populations – stepfamilies, first-time parents, couples facing long separations or recovery from a major health crisis.

Below are a few marriage and couples education programs. Each is a comprehensive program for married or unmarried couples that teaches skills for maintaining a lasting relationship. Each has a variety of formats and can be taught in various settings.

### **Couple Communication**

Couple Communication teaches couples to speak constructively to one another and listen accurately and productively. The program focusing on effective talking, listening, conflict

resolution, and anger management skills, can be employed as a method of marriage enrichment or as part of an educational program for troubled marriages. Couple Communication can be taught in groups of couples or to one couple at a time. Introductory and advanced versions of the course may be taken sequentially. Over 500,000 couples in 36 states and six foreign countries have used Couple Communication. These include couples in various economic groups, older and younger, and couples in troubled and well-functioning marriages. Instructor print and video materials are available in English and Spanish.

### Divorce Busting

Michele Weiner-Davis, author of *Divorce Busting*, has developed two teach-out-of-the-box marriage education programs, Marriage Breakthrough and Keeping Love Alive. Both include Leader's Manuals, can be taught by professionals or lay educators, teach skills for finding solutions that work with all couples regardless of cultural, socioeconomic, or religious backgrounds, and both can be used even if only one spouse participates. The Divorce Busting Center also offers relationship skill-building resources including programs, books, and on-line support groups aimed at helping couples navigate all stages of marriage ranging from pre-marital to the brink of divorce. The programs include factual information about the undesirable impacts of divorce on both children and spouses to help couples think twice before leaving their marriage.

### Family Wellness: Survival Skills for Healthy Families

Survival Skills for Healthy Families is a unique 12-hour parenting and marriage education program that involves the whole family and teaches practical, lifelong skills to strengthen and empower families. Laity, ministers, educators, and mental health workers trained to present this program have reached over a million families nationwide since 1980. The material has been used with a variety of demographic groups including blue-collar workers, low-income families, migrants, refugees, fragile families, and military families. The program is taught in a group setting including congregations of up to 600 people at a time in retreat settings. Materials include interactive workbooks and audio and video tapes in English, Spanish and Chinese.

### PAIRS: Practical Application of Relationship Skills

Practical Application of Relationship Skills (PAIRS) offers programs ranging from a one-day workshop to a 16-week mastery course including topics such as: increasing communication skills; understanding love and emotion; identifying styles of behavior demonstrated while under stress; understanding the difference between fair and unfair fighting; using conflict resolution skills; and identifying hidden expectations in a marriage. All courses emphasize putting newly-learned skills into practice and all discuss communication about practical family issues, such as money, children, sex, in-laws, housework, and fidelity. PAIRS FIRST can be used as part of premarital preparation. Adaptations of the PAIRS program include Christian PAIRS, PAIRS Basic (Military), and PEERS for schools and youth groups.

### PREP: Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program

PREP, emphasizing strategies aimed at lowering marriage risk factors and raising protective factors to help the marriage, focuses on: effective communication, teamwork for problem solving, managing conflict, and preserving and enhancing commitment and friendship. PREP skills are available in the *Fighting for Your Marriage* book and tape series. The program is widely used. For example, the military has launched a major effort to support marriages using PREP materials and Oklahoma's marriage initiative uses PREP. As an example of a marriage initiative in a mental health setting, the Chesterfield County Mental Health Center (CMHC) in Virginia offers an adaptation of the PREP program, For Better Or Worse. The Chesterfield center is funded by county government. There are also various PREP adaptations such as Christian PREP, Jewish PREP, African American PREP, Empty Nester PREP, Becoming Parents PREP, etc. Basic PREP program teachers can purchase materials to teach any of the adaptation programs.

### Relationship Enhancement

The Relationship Enhancement program teaches communication and conflict resolution skills in a group format that assists couples with significant relationship problems to improve their communication skills quickly. The course is also useful for premarital preparation. Training for professionals or lay educators can be completed in two days.

## Stepfamily & Remarriage Education Programs

### Stepping Together: Smart Steps for Stepfamilies

Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Stepfamily Association of America developed this research-based, 6-week (12-hour) educational program for remarried couples and their children. Children and adults attend parallel group sessions which use presentations, hands-on exercises, and discussions. The child/adolescent groups cover: defining "family", becoming a stepfamily, stepfamily stereotypes and myths, developing empathy, conflict management, communication skills, dealing with change, and behaviors that build strong stepfamilies. The adult groups cover: realistic expectations, strengthening the couple connection, working with ex-partners, understanding children and child development, discipline styles and child behavior management, developing empathy, defining roles and rules, conflict management, understanding financial and legal matters, and stress management. Facilitator training requires one or two days, depending on the family-life education experience of trainees.

### Strengthening Your Stepfamily

This systematically organized set of readings, recordings and activities teaches singles considering remarriage and stepfamilies to reach their full potential for a rich family life. The program's flexibility allows sessions to be adapted to the special preferences and scheduling needs of the user. Kits contain all the components needed to make leading a group easy. Strengthening Your Stepfamily, the participant's text, includes charts, chapter summaries, a "Challenge to Conquer," an "Understanding My Stepfamily" activity, and review questions at each of the five chapters. The Leader's Guide includes leadership guidelines, learning objectives, step-by-step session instructions, discussion questions, and tapescripts. The Stepfamily Encouragement Packet offers at-home activities for practicing class lessons in the family. Audiocassettes of dramatic vignettes illustrate concepts and stimulate discussion. The kit also contains Publicity Aids, Review Charts, Blackline Masters, and Pre- and Post-Assessment Forms to evaluate the program's effectiveness.

## Premarital and Marriage Inventories

Premarital and marital inventories provide couples with an objective assessment of their strengths and weaknesses. Premarital inventories are designed to help couples discover differences in backgrounds, individual personality traits or expectations that may cause problems after they marry. The instruments are also tailored for married couples and are used in marriage-strengthening efforts. Inventories are administered to each individual in a couple separately. Results of the comparison are the basis for premarital preparation or marital education. Some inventories designed to be self-administered are available on-line. The purpose of these tools is not to determine whether two people should get or stay married but to frame issues for discussion. The following are the most widely used inventories.

### FOCCUS/REFOCCUS

Facilitating Open Couple Communications, Understanding and Study (*FOCCUS*) originally developed for use in Catholic premarital preparation courses, is available in four editions: General, Christian Non-Denominational, Catholic and Alternate (for learning impaired). Comprising 189 questions, FOCCUS is designed to cover issues of communication, finances, sexuality, cohabitation, and interfaith differences. A three-hour set of training videos, scoring software, and facilitator handbook enable people who are not professional counselors, such as volunteer mentor couples, to administer the FOCCUS inventory and lead discussions with couples planning to marry. REFOCCUS is a version for use by married couples seeking marriage enrichment.

### PREPARE/ENRICH

PREPARE asks individuals in a couple planning to marry if they agree or disagree with 165 statements in areas such as communications, conflict resolution, finances, family of origin, and sexuality. Examples include: I am concerned that my future spouse sometimes spends money foolishly; I am concerned that I am marrying too soon; My family approves of my future spouse; My future spouse and I have discussed the number of children we want. After the couple has completed the inventory, they meet with a counselor and review a fifteen page computer-generated report comparing their answers. The ENRICH Couple Satisfaction Scale measures marital satisfaction that asks questions about a couple's communication, conflict resolution, roles, finances, leisure time, sexual relationship, parenting, family and friends, and religion. A second component, entitled Idealistic Distortion Scale, measures the extent to which the couple is optimistic, realistic or pessimistic in answering the questions. These materials are designed for use with a PREPARE/ENRICH trained counselor, educator or clergy person.

## RELATE

RELATE (The Relationship Evaluation Questionnaire) is an assessment tool for marriage preparation and marriage enrichment. The inventory is designed for use privately or with a counselor or marital educator by couples or individuals. The inventory results are available to the couple in a report that includes graphs and charts displaying information on several aspects of that couple's relationship. The report: addresses issues of interpersonal communication; assesses a couple's level of skill at managing conflict and building consensus; and aims to determine how characteristics such as family-of-origin, childhood relationships, and personality traits affect marital relationships. RELATE is available on-line.

## Transition to Parenthood & Home Visitation Programs

The birth of the first child is the event in marriage or a relationship most likely to precipitate separation or divorce. Taking advantage of this “teachable moment” can increase stability in these unions by equipping couples to manage the increased disagreements, conflict and anxiety they face at this highly vulnerable time.

### Becoming Parents Program

The Becoming Parents Program (BPP) is a 24-hour educational program designed for married and unmarried cohabitating couples who are becoming parents for the first time. BPP for biological parents consists of 21 hours of classes during pregnancy, with a 3-hour “booster” session when the baby is 6 to 8 weeks old. (Scheduling of classes for adoptive or foster parents depends on individual couples’ circumstances.) The course consists of a series of brief lectures, videos, group discussions, and individual and couple homework exercises. BPP’s foundation is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) supplemented by aspects of the Stop Anger and Violence Escalation Program and Domestic Conflict Containment Program, both of which focus on managing stress and anger and preventing physical violence. Course material is divided into: couple care, self care, and baby care. BPP instructor training takes three days.

### Marriage Moments: Strengthening Your Marriage As You Become Parents

Marriage Moments is a marriage education curriculum designed to strengthen couples’ relationships as they prepare for the challenges associated with becoming new parents. Marriage Moments can be integrated into childbirth classes for pregnant couples, capitalizing on their availability in an educational setting and their openness to change at this important transition point in their lives. Five brief video presentations introduce a topic, and couples are given activity workbooks to guide their at-home, active-learning exercises. The curriculum challenges the myth that successful marriages are rooted in individual gratification. Rather, it stresses building marriage on a stronger foundation of friendship and partnership of two people who share a vision and life goals, and who nurture their partnership with the virtues of generosity, fairness, and loyalty.

### Nurse Home Visitation: The Nurse-Family Partnership Program

The Nurse-Family Partnership program uses nurse home visitors to improve the health and social functioning of low-income, first-time mothers, their babies, and their families. The program operating in more than 20 states through departments of health, nursing services, hospitals and other organizations. Although not originally designed to encourage marriage, rigorous evaluation revealed increased marriage rates as one outcome of the program. Work is underway to test the integration of a component of partner relationship enhancement and conflict management (PREP) program into the home-visit program. This new model is being developed and implemented as part of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative.

Nurses work with caseloads of no more than 25 families. They make home visits during pregnancy and continue through the first two years of the child's life. They visit every one to two weeks, following a schedule keyed to the developmental stages of pregnancy and early childhood. During pregnancy, the nurses help women improve pregnancy outcomes by helping them improve health behaviors affecting pre-term delivery, low birth weight, and infant neurodevelopmental impairment. Nurses work with women to improve their diets, reduce their use of cigarettes, alcohol, and illegal drugs, identify emerging obstetrical problems, and work with their doctors. After delivery, the nurses help parents improve their child's health and development by helping parents provide more responsible and competent care for their children. They also focus on parental plans and efforts to become economically self-sufficient by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education, and find jobs.

Although the program has not included an explicit focus on marriage, the nurses work to enhance informal support for the mothers and children, by involving fathers and other family members. The program includes a curriculum explicitly designed to help fathers adapt effectively to their roles. Fathers are explicitly invited to participate in the regular home visits. They are encouraged to provide emotional and practical support for the mother in concrete ways, accompany the mother to the hospital for delivery, provide support and guidance to their child, reflect on their own child-rearing histories and the kind of father they want to be, continue their education/employment or find work, and actively provide financial support for their families.

## **Mentor and Faith-Based Programs**

### **Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment**

The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (ACME) is a nonprofit, nonsectarian couples membership organization sponsoring activities and educational experiences run by couples for couples and designed to teach the skills and resources to develop more intimate, mutually satisfying marriages, and promote family wellness. ACME trains and certifies lay leader couples to teach marriage retreats, workshops, and community events. ACME has chapters in many cities and serves as a clearinghouse for marriage enrichment resources. Some refer to it as the “marriage club.”

### **Caring Couples Network**

Caring Couples Network (CCN) is a model in which married couples, clergy, and professional counselors organize as teams in religious congregations or community centers to serve couples and families experiencing difficulties. The purpose of the program is to help married couples and families in crisis and prepare engaged couples for marriage. The CCN handbook, developed by the United Methodist Church, explains how to: get a local network started, enlist and train candidates to be mentoring couples, identify couples in need, and find ways to link the local CCN network with the larger community. Teams of mentoring couples and clergy/counselors arrange enrichment events and locate other resources for engaged couples and distressed couples.

### **Catholic Engaged Encounter**

This Christian marriage preparation program delivered during weekend retreats gives couples an opportunity to talk honestly and privately and share attitudes about expectations, ambitions, goals, money, sex, children, family and their role in church and society. A team of two couples and a priest share their experiences and encourage engaged couples to examine their own relationships. The format includes questions for individuals to answer privately and time for couples to discuss their thoughts with each other. Although begun as a Catholic program, it is open to people of all Christian faiths and is available nationwide. The cost to organize or attend a weekend retreat varies depending on the sponsoring church or organization.

### **Marriage Matters of Iowa**

Marriage Matters, an initiative of the Iowa Family Policy Center, takes a comprehensive approach to reducing divorce and strengthening families one community at a time. The state office supports local efforts by bringing leaders together regularly, providing fundraising strategies, conducting marriage saving seminars and supporting the adoption of a Marriage Matters Agreement, a document created and adopted by a diverse group of Christian clergy within a community which sets marital standards and commits the faith community to:

- Help engaged couples prepare for marriage by instructing them in the biblical roles and preserving the biblical doctrines of marriage, morality and divorce;
- Assist newlywed couples with the tools and mentors they will need to build and maintain strong marriages;

- Enrich marriage relationships; minister to troubled marriages; and provide support for blended families, step-families and single parents;
- Encourage participation in a series of marriage-strengthening strategies having community-wide impact.
- Communicate to the larger community that clergy, who perform 90% of the weddings in Iowa, believe in the concept of marriage and are serious about building up marriage relationships.

### Marriage Savers/Community Marriage Policies

Marriage Savers' primary strategies are to:

- Establish Marriage Saver Congregations in which mentor couples are trained to help engaged couples prepare for life-long marriage, strengthen existing marriages, and restore troubled marriages.
- Establish Community Marriage Policies (CMPs) in which congregations join together with the goal of reducing the community's divorce rate. CMPs have been established in more than 150 cities in 38 states.

Marriage Savers encourages congregations to require a minimum of four months of marriage preparation, including a premarital inventory for couples considering marriage, weekend retreats for married couples, step-family support groups, and marriage mentors for young couples and couples in crisis. Mentor couples can be trained to provide premarital preparation, work with married couples to strengthen their marriages, and work with couples in crisis. Couples with strong marriages that were once on the brink of failure provide mentoring for those in crisis. Going beyond a single encouraging weekend experience, an ongoing couple-to-couple mentoring relationship can provide guidance from an older, wiser couple who have suffered similar trauma, and can offer prayer, friendship and encouragement.

### Reconciling God's Way

Reconciling God's Way is a program designed to equip pastors and mentor couples to provide counseling services to married couples. Twelve weekly classes are designed to help couples or individuals strengthen their own marriage or who want to learn ways to help others whose marriage is in crisis. The Leader's Kit and handbook trains pastors and couples to lead the curriculum and to recruit support partners to mentor married couples.

### Retrouvaille

Retrouvaille is a program for couples with serious marital problems including those stemming from alcoholism, gambling, violence, etc. It helps troubled couples put the past behind them and move forward constructively and lovingly. With the help of clergy, trained volunteer couples who have experienced severe problems themselves and almost divorced, teach others how to repair their marriages. The program begins with a weekend retreat and continues with 12 follow-up meetings over three months. During the weekend, couples are taught to discuss their problems constructively and are given opportunities to practice the skills in privacy. Follow-up

meetings with a support group of similarly situated couples help reinforce the importance of listening and intimacy and provide examples of how to employ communication tools for building a stable relationship.

## Responsible Fatherhood and Marriage Strengthening Programs

Programs focused on promoting responsible fatherhood often include positive male role modeling and open communication with a spouse as essential to the identity of what it means to be a man.

### 10 Rites of Passage Program, National Family Life and Education Center (NFLEC)

The 10 Rites of Passage teaches the importance of responsible fatherhood, marriage and abstinence to at-risk, disadvantaged youth. The program teaches responsibility to self, family and the community and imbues students with a positive, empowering vision, long-term goals, and skills. The Center consults nationally and internationally to agencies and organizations on teen pregnancy prevention, father-involvement programs for teen fathers, and on building social and community responsibility, and self-esteem in adolescent males.

### Boot Camp for New Dads

Boot Camp For New Dads (BCND) was formed in 1990 to help new fathers "hit the ground crawling" when they are confronted with the realities of fatherhood. A community-based program, BCND delivers support and education for new fathers to help them adjust to parenthood. With programs operating in over 100 communities across the country and a network of veterans, coaches and supporters, BCND seeks to build and sustain a vibrant new culture of fatherhood throughout America.

### MAD DADS

MAD DADS is an acronym for Men Against Destruction Defending Against Drugs & Social Disorder. MAD DADS Inc. was founded in May 1989 by a group of concerned African-American men in Omaha, Nebraska. They aimed to provide positive role models as loving fathers who were a visible community presence against the negative forces affecting children, families and neighborhoods. The MAD DADS model incorporates:

- Weekend Street Patrols within troubled areas that report crime, drug sales and other destructive activities to the proper authorities,
- Positive Community Activities for youth, such as block parties, rallies, night parades and car shows,
- Chaperones for community events and surrogate fathers to youth at non-traditional times and locations, and
- A non-traditional, 13 week, Rites of Passage program called SANKOFA for African-American boys, ages 6-21.

Presently, there are 57 MAD DADS Chapters in 15 states.

### The National Center for Fathering

Founded in 1990, the Center conducts research, develops practical resources, supports public education and awareness campaigns, and trains men to be more effective fathers. Training

includes on-line or group training for fathers and training for trainers in small or large groups – from 25 to 1,000 or more. Training includes complete instructor materials to equip men to train dads to be more effective fathers in their own communities.

#### The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization

The goal of this national organization is to connect fathers with their children, their families, and their communities and to increase and support marriage. Under the Institute's approach, a husband/wife supervisory team heads the effort in each community served, overseeing case managers who provide intensive, one-to-one, home-based services. The supervisory team and the case managers live and work in the community and are available around the clock. The staff helps program participants improve father/mother and parent/child relationships; acknowledge paternity; provide support, and increase contacts between parents and children. The program focuses intensely on marriage, family formation, and building strong families. The Institute's approach is based on modeling responsible fathering and marriage behaviors and helping young fathers improve their self-esteem.

#### The National Fatherhood Initiative

The mission of this non-profit, non-sectarian, non-partisan organization, founded in 1994 to stimulate a society-wide movement to confront the growing problem of father absence, is to improve the well-being of children by increasing the number of children growing up with involved, committed, and responsible fathers in their lives. NFI conducts public education and awareness campaigns, sponsors an annual conference and community forums, publishes a quarterly newsletter, conducts research, works to enhance the effectiveness of public policies in encouraging responsible fatherhood, and provides information to organizations and to men to support fatherhood. NFI also conducts workshops on promoting marriage in fatherhood programs by showing the value of helping fathers who want to marry or who are married in creating happy, healthy, mature marriages that benefit the entire family. The workshops discuss: the importance of marriage to the fatherhood movement; the benefits of marriage for fathers, mothers, children, society, and fatherhood organizations; tools and other resources to help prepare couples for marriage and strengthen existing marriages; ways to reduce barriers in organizations to promoting marriage. NFI has local affiliates in Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia.

## Marriage Education in Schools and Youth Groups

An important category of marriage education includes approaches and curricula designed especially for youth. These courses are based on the idea that children and youth, just like adults, can learn skills to help them have successful marriages and form functioning families. The focus on teenagers is based on the belief that teaching interpersonal skills before young adults marry helps them have satisfying marriages and decrease the chances that their marriages will end in divorce.

The Florida Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act of 1998 mandates marriage skills education for all 9th and 10th graders as part of their life management classes. The law does not prescribe a specific course. School officials are using several different packaged curricula widely used around the country including PEERS, Connections, Partners, and Loving Well.

### CONNECTIONS

Connections is a course composed of two units: Dating and Emotions (for ages 13-17) and Relationships and Marriage (for ages 16-20). The course for the younger students uses exercises designed to teach teens: how relationships develop; effective ways to communicate; how to spot destructive patterns; and how to deal with romantic emotions. The marriage unit emphasizes practical tools for managing and making wise decisions about serious relationships and covers topics like self awareness, communication, and conflict. The materials include an activity called the Marriage Game that illustrates what to expect in the normal course of marriage and teaches conflict management skills.

### PARTNERS

Partners, a ten-week marriage course developed by the American Bar Association Section of Family Law, is designed to give high school students an understanding of the challenges in a marriage. The course, adapted from the PAIRS program for adults, consists of: a set of print and video materials to help teachers address topics such as choosing a mate, communication skills, and managing stress in relationships.

### PEERS: Practical Exercises Enriching Relationship Skills

This comprehensive, sequenced program for high school students teaches skills that can: enhance communication; help resolve conflicts fairly; enable youth to avoid misunderstandings and violence; and promote a respect for individual differences. The principal focus of the course is to teach students how these communication and relationship skills can help ensure successful marriages and fully functioning families later in life. There is also a middle school version of the course. The program, an adaptation of the PAIRS course for adults, is designed to be taught in a classroom setting using brief lectures, role play in relationship and marriage scenarios, peer coaching, guided imagery, journal writing and group discussion.

## The Art of Loving Well

The Art of Loving Well: A Character Education Curriculum for Today's Teenagers aims to promote responsible social and sexual values in adolescents through literature that reveals the complexities of life and relationships. The curriculum is divided into three sections: Early Loves and Losses, Romance, and Commitment and Marriage. It includes activities to help teens learn from their readings and from conversations with parents, teachers and friends. The syllabus contains 41 literary selections, both classics and contemporary literature for adolescents. The Art of Loving Well textbook is available with a teacher's guide and video selections.

## Abstinence Education

### Families United to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Families United to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (FUPTP) serves boys and girls between 9 and 15 years of age who are at high risk for early pregnancy. The program's educational and motivational approach includes: a values-based curriculum; a peer mentoring component; parental involvement; and a range of other activities. The program teaches values, decision-making and goal-setting, communication and social skills, understanding male and female reproductive anatomy and building healthy relationships, in addition to promoting self-awareness and high self-esteem. Through classroom and cultural activities and daily after-school programming, FUPTP encourages teens to be more responsible in their decision-making while instilling in them a strong motivation to delay sexual activity until marriage.

FUPTP aims to strengthen family values and promote family unity, strong and healthy marriages, and responsible parenting. Parents meet in groups once a month for one hour to discuss issues surrounding premarital sex and the weekly parent activity handouts they receive. Parents also receive home visits to update them on their teens' progress and to address family needs. The program includes an intensive seven-week class (Monday through Friday) during the summer and a three-hour meeting each Saturday during the school year. Families United to Prevent Teen Pregnancy is being evaluated as part of the national evaluation of selected abstinence-only education programs funded from Title V.

### Heritage Community Services

Heritage Community Services provides character-based abstinence education programs at multiple sites in 15 counties in South Carolina, including 45 public schools and other public and private institutions in the communities surrounding those schools. Services are provided through regional offices at sites in Greenville, North Augusta, Florence, Walterboro and Charleston.

The program includes: (1) abstinence education for middle and high school students; (2) character and lifeskills education for school use; (3) a community component involving parents, the faith community, the media, and other partnerships. A health component for abstinence advocacy in a clinical/medical setting is being developed.

The Abstinence Education Component is a 450-minute high-impact curriculum delivered by Heritage Community Services staff to middle and high school students, beginning in sixth grade and continuing, ideally, through high school. There is currently a single core curriculum that is adapted to the maturity of the students, and program plans include developing follow-up curriculum.

The Character/Lifeskills Education Component, called *Heritage Keepers*, includes a three-year curriculum designed to empower students to abstain from risky behavior through self-control, and to accept personal responsibility for their own thoughts, feelings and actions. The curriculum emphasizes personal development of lifeskills to empower students to abstain from risky behaviors and to reach their potential. It is delivered by Heritage Community Services staff

in twelve sessions annually, and is implemented in some schools during regular class hours and in others as an after-school club.

The Community Education Component consists of several components, including training for community leaders, parent education about the benefits to their children of abstaining from sexual activity outside of marriage, identifying and educating faith leaders, educating the media, and using the media to educate students and the public.

Heritage Community Services is being evaluated as part of the national evaluation of selected abstinence-only education programs funded from Title V.

### My Choice, My Future

The goal of My Choice, My Future is to promote abstinence until marriage among students in the Powhatan County schools. This program is administered as part of the health and physical education classes during 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Classes meet twice a week, every other week, for 18 weeks. Classroom instruction is enhanced with parent-student homework assignments and parent educational workshops. The character-based curriculum, Reasonable Reasons to Wait, aims to build students' self-esteem, decision making and life planning skills, while motivating youth to choose and maintain a healthy abstinent lifestyle. A major component of the curriculum is a lesson on "Marvelous Marriages" and another on "Parenthood Prerequisites." In the "Marvelous Marriages" lesson, students learn what a marriage is, why people get married, and what makes a marriage work. By emphasizing trust and self-control, the curriculum supports students' understanding of sex in the context of a meaningful, married relationship. My Choice, My Future is being evaluated as part of the national evaluation of selected abstinence-only education programs funded from Title V.

### ReCapturing the Vision

ReCapturing the Vision has two main components. One focuses on self-esteem and youth development, the other called Vessels of Honor, focuses on abstinence from premarital sex. The program is taught daily to middle-school girls as an elective class. In addition to classroom instructions, program staff members (social workers) visit each student at home once a month and provide support and/or referrals to local services as needed. Through collaboration with local churches, students also participate in after-school programs focused predominantly on tutoring. Although girls generally spend one year in the program, some enroll for a second year. An important component of the Vessels of Honor curriculum is the lesson devoted to marriage. This is designed to build girls' appreciation for the institution of marriage and stimulate their thinking about waiting until the right moment to get married.

Additional features of ReCapturing the Vision include a teen abstinence rally; a year-end closing ceremony for all program participants; regular trips to cultural events; and suits for each program participant to wear, donated by a local company each year. ReCapturing the Vision is being evaluated as part of the national evaluation of selected abstinence-only education programs funded from Title V.

### Teens in Control

The Teens in Control program is provided by staff from the Aaron E. Henry Community Health Center in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Once a week during a regular class period for the entire school year, the program teaches an abstinence-until-marriage curriculum to boys and girls in grades 5 and 6 in the Coahoma County, Tunica, and Bearden School Districts. The modified Postponing Sexual Involvement curriculum, supplemented by additional materials, is used for the fifth grade program, and the Sex Can Wait curriculum for the sixth grade program. During their two-years enrollment, students are taught the risks of early sexual involvement, how to resist social and peer pressures, new assertiveness skills, male and female anatomy, facts about HIV/AIDs and STDs, their values and decisionmaking, setting personal goals, and enhancing their self-esteem. The program serves a predominantly African-American population in an extremely poor rural setting. Planned expansions for the program include adding a peer mentoring component for seventh grade students who have completed the fifth and sixth grade curriculum. Teens in Control is being evaluated as part of the national evaluation of selected abstinence-only education programs funded from Title V.

### The Best Friends Foundation

The Best Friends Foundation is a youth development and character education curriculum that promotes the well-being of adolescent girls and aims to prevent teenage pregnancy by encouraging positive alternatives to premature sexual activity and illicit drug or alcohol use. First introduced to a class of sixth-grade girls in a Southwest Washington, D.C. elementary school, the Foundation's programs have been expanded to 26 cities in 14 states serving 5,000 girls across the country. In the 2000-2001 school year, a companion program, Best Men, began serving 150 boys in 6 schools in Washington, D.C. and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Best Men is similar to Best Friends, but the curriculum is tailored to the developmental needs of adolescent young boys.

Best Friends provides adolescent girls with an intensive and long-term youth development curriculum. Girls participate in group activities to help them acquire sound judgment and critical thinking and life skills. Best Friends' activities address concerns common to all adolescent girls, including:

- friendship,
- love and dating,
- self-respect,
- decision-making,
- physical fitness and nutrition,
- alcohol and drug use, and
- sexually transmitted diseases.

Girls discuss their dreams and focus on how to achieve them through writing in a journal, watching videos, role playing games, group discussions, and special speakers. Best Friends is a multi-year curriculum, beginning in fifth or sixth grade and continuing through high school graduation. Each year, girls spend at least 110 hours in mentor and group activities. In addition, college scholarships are offered to some program graduates.

The Best Men program provides boys with the tools necessary to help them develop into responsible young men. It emphasizes abstinence from sex, drugs, and alcohol and promotes the participation of adult male role models particularly fathers and/or male guardians in the lives of the boys. Throughout the school year, the boys meet weekly with their mentors and their classmates.

Key components of the curriculum include:

- respect,
- decision-making,
- friendship,
- relationships,
- alcohol and drugs,
- fitness and nutrition, and
- AIDs and STDs.

The program also offers weekly Tae Kwan Do sessions, a martial art that reinforces self-discipline and promotes physical fitness. Other extracurricular activities strengthen positive bonds among the boys as well as with their mentors. Best Men currently works with boys in elementary and junior high, with plans to continue through high school graduation.

#### WAIT (Why Am I Tempted) Training

WAIT (*Why Am I Tempted*) Training focuses on what teens are interested in most: relationships. It demonstrates how abstinence until marriage provides the foundation for meaningful and fulfilling relationships now and in the future. WAIT Training recognizes that young people in today's culture want to hear less about numbers and more about relationships. The program emphasizes love education rather than sex education. WAIT Training is premised on the belief that if kids are given the skills to build effective, healthy relationships with the opposite sex, the risk of sexually transmitted diseases, illegitimate pregnancy, and emotional stress can be eliminated.

WAIT Training teaches teens the benefits of waiting until marriage. WAIT Training combines a slide presentation with discussions to keep teens actively engaged in learning. WAIT Training can be used in middle and high school classroom presentations, all-school assemblies and youth group functions.

Unique to WAIT Training is a two-day certification seminar that equips abstinence educators with the knowledge and skills needed to make successful presentations to teens. Unlike other programs, WAIT Training aims to equip teachers with the "whys" as well as the "how to's" of abstinence education. Furthermore, many of the WAIT Training exercises are role-played by training participants to provide educators with a better understanding of how to successfully utilize the exercises in the classroom.

## **Divorce Education and Mediation**

The 1998 Nationwide Survey of Court Connected Divorce Education Programs found that in 1998, half the jurisdictions in the country required divorce education classes for couples seeking divorce who are the parents of minor children. Since 1998, Florida law has required all couples filing for divorce with minor children to take a divorce education class. In other jurisdictions, the classes are left to the discretion of the judge or are required only when couples cannot reach agreement or if they file for a modification to an original agreement custody, visitation or support agreement. The courses, ranging from 2 – 6 hours, focus primarily on teaching the effects of divorce on children.

Divorce mediation is focused chiefly on increasing cooperation, reducing litigation and speeding the process of divorce – reducing the court docket. It typically involves helping couples decide issues of child custody, visitation, support and how marital property will be divided. It's thought of by many as "divorce helper." But because, in 80 percent of cases, one of the parties says they don't want a divorce, some are proposing an expanded form of divorce mediation, one leaving the door open for reconciliation.

### **Before You Divorce**

This Christian-based set of video presentations provides a "reality check" for couples considering divorce which emphasizes the emotional and financial costs of divorce for adults and children may far outweigh the perceived benefits. The sessions help couples sort through complicated issues in key areas affected by divorce such as finances, physical and emotional well-being, legal issues, and effects on children.

### **The Michigan Mediation Project**

The Michigan Mediation Project is implementing a new approach, Focused Mediation, to teach couples skills to help them discuss issues and manage conflict during the exploration process and post-divorce. Couples explore the initial causes of their divorce and consider reconciliation at any point along the way. The Michigan Project, a coalition of seven counties headed by Judges Jim Sheridan and Helen Brown, focuses on preventing unnecessary divorces.

## **Additional Marriage Education Resources**

### **Family Information Services**

FIS provides resources for parenting, couple and family education. Subscribers receive monthly resource packets containing ready-to-use educational materials developed by experienced practitioners on parenting, child development, marriage, family and youth development topics. Materials formatted to use directly with couples or parents, include presentation guides/modules, handouts, reprintable newsletter articles, book reviews, practitioner-oriented research updates and audio taped interviews with experts. Some sections are designed for parents in special circumstances (teens, low literacy, etc.) Also available is a 5-volume Parent & Family Educator's Resource Library.

### **Marriage Builders, Inc.**

Founded by Willard Harley, Jr., Ph.D., author of "His Needs, Her Needs," Marriage Builders is an organization devoted to helping couples learn how to fall in love and stay in love...forever. The Marriage Builders website provides hundreds of articles written by Dr. Harley which provide clear guidance on how to build and maintain a mutually enjoyable marriage.

### **The Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education**

The Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (CMFCE) is a clearinghouse for marriage and family education. CMFCE maintains an on-line, constantly updated listing of resources – curricula, classes, training-for-trainers, books, tapes, speakers, etc. The Coalition sponsors a FREE e-newsletter, articles, legislation, an information archive and the annual Smart Marriages/Happy Families Conference. The Coalition is an independent, non-partisan, non-denominational, non-sectarian organization whose members include educators, counselors, clergy, policy makers, journalists and community activists.

## Attachments

### Contacts for Further Information

Oklahoma Marriage Initiative  
(405) 848-2171  
Website: [www.okmarriage.org](http://www.okmarriage.org)

Utah Governor's Commission on Marriage  
Melanie Resse, Director  
Governor's Commission on Marriage  
111 State Capitol Building  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114  
Phone: 801-538-1533  
Fax: 801-538-1304  
Website: [www.utahgift.org](http://www.utahgift.org)

Virginia Partners in Prevention  
Stephanie Mayes, M.S.W.  
Division of Women's and Infants' Health  
1500 East Main Street, Suite 135  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Phone: 804 786 5916  
E-mail: [PIP@vdh.state.va.us](mailto:PIP@vdh.state.va.us)

Greater Grand Rapids Community Marriage  
Policy  
Mark Eastburg, PhD  
Pine Rest Family Institute  
300 68th Street SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49501-0165  
Phone: 616.831.2622  
Fax: 616.455.5360  
Website: [www.ggrcmrriagepolicy.org](http://www.ggrcmrriagepolicy.org)

First Things First  
Julie Baumgardner, President and Executive  
Director  
701 Cherokee Boulevard, Suite 230  
Chattanooga, TN 37405  
Phone: 423 267 5383  
E-mail: [ftf@firstthings.org](mailto:ftf@firstthings.org)  
Website: [www.firstthings.org](http://www.firstthings.org)

Families Northwest  
Jeff Kemp, Executive Director  
K. Jason Krafsky, Community Strategies  
Director  
Box 40584  
Bellevue, WA 98015  
425-637-5959  
Email: [info@familiesnorthwest.org](mailto:info@familiesnorthwest.org)  
Web: [www.familiesnorthwest.org](http://www.familiesnorthwest.org)

PREP, Inc.  
Box 102530  
Denver, CO 80250-2530  
Phone: 800-366-0166  
EMail: [Info@PREPinc.com](mailto:Info@PREPinc.com)  
Website: [www.prepinc.com](http://www.prepinc.com)

For more information on the Chesterfield  
County adaptation of PREP:  
Pat Cullen  
Phone: 804-768-7229  
Email: [cullenp@co.chesterfield.va.us](mailto:cullenp@co.chesterfield.va.us)

PAIRS Foundation, Ltd.  
9400 North Central Expressway, Suite 310  
Dallas, TX 75231  
Phone: 888-PAIRS-4U  
Email: [Ksimpson@swbell.net](mailto:Ksimpson@swbell.net)  
Website: [www.pairs.com](http://www.pairs.com)

Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc.  
30752 Southview Drive #200  
Evergreen, CO 80439  
Phone: 800-328-5099  
E-mail: [icp@comskills.com](mailto:icp@comskills.com)  
Website: [www.couplecommunication.com](http://www.couplecommunication.com)

National Institute for Relationship Enhancement  
4400 East-West Highway  
Bethesda, MD 20904-4501  
Phone: 301-986-1479 or 800-432-6454  
E-mail: [niremd@nire.org](mailto:niremd@nire.org)  
Website: [www.nire.org](http://www.nire.org)

Divorce Busting Center  
Box 197  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
Phone: 800-664-2435  
Email: [DBusting@aol.com](mailto:DBusting@aol.com)  
Website: [www.divorcebusting.com](http://www.divorcebusting.com)

Family Wellness  
George Doub, MFCC, MDiv and Flo Creighton,  
MPH, LCSW  
Box 66533  
Scotts Valley, California 95067-6533  
831-440-0279  
Email: [families@familywellness.com](mailto:families@familywellness.com)  
Web: [www.familywellness.com](http://www.familywellness.com)

Stepfamily Association of America  
800-735-0329  
Email: [SAA@SAAfamilies.org](mailto:SAA@SAAfamilies.org)  
Web: [www.SAAfamilies.org](http://www.SAAfamilies.org)

Stepping Together  
Ron Deal, MMFT, CFLE  
1601 James St  
Jonesboro, AR 72401  
870-932-9254  
Email: [rdeal@swchurchchristjboro.org](mailto:rdeal@swchurchchristjboro.org) Web:  
[www.swfamily.org/stepfamily](http://www.swfamily.org/stepfamily)

Strengthening Your Stepfamily  
Elizabeth Einstein, co-developer  
This comprehensive teaching tool can be  
ordered through Einstein (607) 272-2552 or  
directly from the publisher at 1-800-328-2560.

Barbara Markey, PhD  
FOCCUS, Inc  
3214 North 60th St.  
Omaha, NE 68104  
Phone: 888-874-2684  
Email: [flo@omahaflo.creighton.edu](mailto:flo@omahaflo.creighton.edu)  
Website: [www.foccusinc.com](http://www.foccusinc.com)

David Olson, PhD  
Life Innovations, Inc.  
Box 190  
Minneapolis, MN 55440-0190  
Phone: 800-331-1661  
Email: [cs@lifeinnovations.com](mailto:cs@lifeinnovations.com)  
Website: [www.lifeinnovations.com](http://www.lifeinnovations.com)

Tom Holman, PhD  
Relate  
Box 25391  
Provo, UT 84602-5391  
Phone: 801-378-4359  
Fax: 801-378-4385  
Email: [RELATE@byu.edu](mailto:RELATE@byu.edu)  
Website: <http://relate.byu.edu/>

Pamela Jordan, PhD  
Becoming Parents Program  
Box 55521  
Seattle, WA 98155-0521  
Phone: 877- 586- 2778  
Website: [www.becomingparents.com](http://www.becomingparents.com)

Marriage Moments Office  
(801) 378-5287  
[marriagemoments@byu.edu](mailto:marriagemoments@byu.edu)  
Brigham Young University  
350 SWKT  
Provo, UT 84602  
Web: <http://marriagemoments.byu.edu>

National Center for Children, Families and  
Communities  
University of Colorado Health Sciences Center –  
School of Nursing  
4200 E. 9th Ave. C288-13  
Denver, CO 80262  
Phone: 303-315-0896  
Fax 303-315-1489  
E-mail: [matt.buhr-vogl@uchsc.edu](mailto:matt.buhr-vogl@uchsc.edu)  
Website: <http://www.nccfc.org>

Mike and Harriet McManus  
Marriage Savers  
9311 Harrington Dr.  
Potomac, MD 20854  
Phone: 301-469-5873  
Fax: 301-469-5871  
E-mail: [michaeljmcmanus@cs.com](mailto:michaeljmcmanus@cs.com)  
Website: [www.marriagesavers.com](http://www.marriagesavers.com)

The Association for Couples in Marriage  
Enrichment  
Box 10596  
Winston-Salem, NC 27108  
Phone: 800-634-8325 Email:  
[acme@bettermarriages.org](mailto:acme@bettermarriages.org) Website:  
[www.bettermarriages.org](http://www.bettermarriages.org)

Retrouvaille  
Phone: 800-470-2230  
Website: [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org)

Pat Ennis, MSW  
1342 Lancaster Avenue  
Syracuse, NY 13210  
Phone: (315) 472-6728  
Email: [pat@thethirdoption.com](mailto:pat@thethirdoption.com)  
Website: [www.thirdoption.com](http://www.thirdoption.com)

Catholic Engaged Encounter  
Phone: 800-339-9790  
Website: [www.engagedencounter.com](http://www.engagedencounter.com)

Family Ministries General Board of Discipleship  
Box 840  
Nashville, TN 37202  
Phone: 800-685-4370  
Fax: 770-442-9742  
E-mail: [mnorton@gbod.org](mailto:mnorton@gbod.org)  
Website: [www.discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org)

Joe and Michelle Williams  
Box 1543  
Modesto, CA, 95353  
Phone: 800-205-6808  
Email: [reconcile@pc-intouch.com](mailto:reconcile@pc-intouch.com)  
Website: [www.bvg.org/reconcilers](http://www.bvg.org/reconcilers)

Marriage Matters of Iowa  
Mike Hartwig  
Iowa Family Policy Center  
1100 N Hickory Blvd, Suite 105  
Pleasant Hill, IA 50327  
Phone: 1-800-FAMILY1  
E-mail: [info@iowaprofamily.org](mailto:info@iowaprofamily.org)  
Website: [www.IFPC.org](http://www.IFPC.org)

National Family Life and Education Center  
Charles Johnson  
5711 W Slauson Ave #240  
Culver City, CA 90230  
310-665-1888  
Fax: 310-665-1880  
Email: [rjnflec@aol.com](mailto:rjnflec@aol.com)  
Web: [www.NFLEC.org](http://www.NFLEC.org)

Charles Ballard, MSW and Frances Ballard, MA  
Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family  
Revitalization  
9300 Arena Drive, Suite 400  
Largo, MD 20774-3716  
(301) 773-2044  
Website: [www.responsiblefatherhood.org](http://www.responsiblefatherhood.org)

National Fatherhood Initiative  
101 Lake Forest Boulevard, Suite 360  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877  
Phone: 301 948-0599  
Fax: 301 948-4325  
Website: [www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)

Ron Nichols, Director of Training  
National Center for Fathering  
Phone: 800-593-3237  
Website: [www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com)

Debbie Sykes, Program Director  
Boot Camp for New Dads  
4605 Barranca Parkway Suite 205  
Irvine, CA 62604  
Phone: 949-786-3146  
Fax: 949-786-9276  
Email: [Debbie@newdads.com](mailto:Debbie@newdads.com)  
Website: [www.newdads.com](http://www.newdads.com)

MAD DADS OMAHA CHAPTER  
P.O. Box 11248  
OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68111  
Phone: 402-451-7169  
E-mail: [maddadsnational@nfinity.com](mailto:maddadsnational@nfinity.com)  
Rev. James Hunter, President  
Bishop Tyler, National Chairman  
Website: [www.maddadsnational.com](http://www.maddadsnational.com)

The PAIRS Foundation, Ltd.  
1056 Creekford Drive, Weston, FL 33326  
Phone: (888) 724-7748  
Fax: (214) 368-1115  
E-mail: [PAIRSline@aol.com](mailto:PAIRSline@aol.com)  
Website: <http://www.pairsfoundation.com/>

Family Law Section  
American Bar Association  
750 N. Lake Shore Dr.  
Chicago, IL, 60611  
Phone: 312-988-5603  
Fax: 312-988-6800  
Email: [familylaw@abanet.org](mailto:familylaw@abanet.org)  
Website: [www.abanet.org/family/partners](http://www.abanet.org/family/partners)

Kay Reed, Director  
The Dibble Fund for Marriage Education  
Box 7881  
Berkeley, CA 94707-0881  
Phone: 800-695-7975  
Fax: 510-528-1956  
Email: [DibbleFund@aol.com](mailto:DibbleFund@aol.com)  
Website: [www.buildingrelationshipskills.org](http://www.buildingrelationshipskills.org)

The Loving Well Project  
Nancy McLaren, Director  
Boston University School of Education  
605 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, MA 02215  
Phone: 617-353-4088  
Fax: 617-353-2909  
Website: [www.bu.edu/sed/lovingwell](http://www.bu.edu/sed/lovingwell)

The Best Friends Foundation  
4455 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 310  
Washington, DC 20008  
Phone: 202-237-8156  
Website: <http://www.bestfriendsfoundation.org>

Jacqueline Jones Del Rosario  
Recapturing the Vision  
950 Hibiscus Street  
Miami, FL 33157  
Phone: (305) 232-6003  
Fax: (305) 232-6092  
E-mail: [recap20@aol.com](mailto:recap20@aol.com)  
Website: [www.recapturingthevision.org](http://www.recapturingthevision.org)

Families United To Prevent Teen Pregnancy  
Marty Kerrigan  
Phone: (414) 449-2868  
E-mail: [mkerrigan@internetwi.com](mailto:mkerrigan@internetwi.com)  
Website: [www.rosaliemanor.org](http://www.rosaliemanor.org)

Gale Grant  
Abstinence Education Initiative  
Virginia Department of Health  
P.O. Box 2448  
1500 E. Main Street  
Room 105  
Richmond, VA 23218-2448  
(804) 225-3697

WAIT Training  
Choosing The Best  
2470 Windy Hill Road, Suite 300  
Marietta, GA 30067  
Phone: 770-952-5251  
Fax: 770-618-3014  
[www.choosingthebest.org/wait.htm](http://www.choosingthebest.org/wait.htm)

Anne Badgley  
Heritage Community Services  
2810 Ashley Phosphate Road, B-10  
Charleston, SC 29418  
(843) 863-0508

Vicki Hearn  
Program Director  
Aaron Henry Community Health Center, Inc.  
510 Highway 322  
P.O. Box 1216  
Clarksdale, MS 38614  
(662) 624-4292

Hon. James Sheridan, JD  
Rex B Martin Judicial Building  
425 N. Main St.  
Adrian, MI 49221  
517-264-4655 f  
Fax: 517-264-4774  
Email: [james.sheridan@lenawee.mi.us](mailto:james.sheridan@lenawee.mi.us)

Hon. Helen Brown, JD  
3rd Circuit Court Training Unit  
1025 E Forest  
Detroit, MI 48207  
313-833-2877  
Fax: 313-833-5778

Judy Parejko, MS  
Menomonie, Wisconsin  
715-664-6137  
Email: [jparejko@juno.com](mailto:jparejko@juno.com)  
Web: [www.DivorceResourceCenter.com](http://www.DivorceResourceCenter.com)

Before You Divorce  
Box 1739  
Wake Forest, NC 27588-1739  
Phone: 800-395-5755  
Website: [www.divorcecare.org](http://www.divorcecare.org)

Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples  
Education (CMFCE)  
Diane Sollee, director  
5310 Belt Rd NW  
Washington, DC 20015  
Email: [cmfce@smartmarriages.com](mailto:cmfce@smartmarriages.com)  
Web: [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com)

Joan Comeau, PhD, CFLE, Director & Editor  
800-852-8112 or 612-755-6233  
Email: [services@familyinfoserv.com](mailto:services@familyinfoserv.com)  
Website: [www.familyinfoserv.com](http://www.familyinfoserv.com)

Marriage Builders  
5260 Lakeview Avenue  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55110  
651-762-8570  
Email: [Admin@MarriageBuilders.com](mailto:Admin@MarriageBuilders.com)  
Web: [www.MarriageBuilders.com](http://www.MarriageBuilders.com)

Marriage Preparation Resources  
1617 Iowa Street  
San Antonio, Texas 78203  
210-534-1129  
Email: [ruhnke@flash.net](mailto:ruhnke@flash.net)  
Web: [www.marriagepreparation.com](http://www.marriagepreparation.com)

#### ACF Contact Information

To suggest changes to current program descriptions, recommend additional programs for inclusion, or for further information, contact Bill Coffin in the Administration for Children and Families at 202-260-1550 or by email at [Bcoffin@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:Bcoffin@acf.hhs.gov).

Agenda from Oklahoma Governor's Conference on Marriage

- 8:30 Introduction to the Conference: Jerry Regier  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Human Services
- 8:40 Welcome: Cathy Keating  
First Lady of Oklahoma
- 8:45 Introduction of Pat Fagan  
Ira Schlezinger, Integris Health
- 8:50 Pat Fagan, The Heritage Foundation, Washington D.C.  
*"Why is marriage important to a society? Does marriage matter? How does marriage affect all citizens?"*
- 9:30 Success Story: Interview by Jennifer Eve, KOCO-TV, Oklahoma City  
Ralph and LaVonne Davis, Oklahoma City
- 9:40 Introduction of Belinda Biscoe, Ph.D.  
Mike Jestes, Oklahoma Family Policy Council
- 9:45 Belinda Biscoe, Ph.D., The University of Oklahoma  
*"What is happening in Oklahoma? Why do we have the second highest divorce rate in the country?"*
- 10:15 Break
- 10:30 Success Story  
Melvin and Esther Fagalia, Shattuck
- 10:40 Introduction of Wade Horn, Ph.D. and Theodora Ooms  
Jerry Regier
- 10:45 Wade Horn, Ph.D., Former Commissioner for Children, Youth and Families, U.S.  
Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.
- Theodora Ooms, Family Impact Seminar, Washington, D.C.
- "What can we do to promote marriage as an institution through public policy? How do we effectively put marriage on the public agenda?"*
- 11:50 Success Story  
Jim and Bernadette Seikel, Yukon

- 12:00 Luncheon with Governor and Mrs. Keating  
*“How can we restore marriage as an institution and how can relationships be improved?”*  
 Master of Ceremony: Wes Lane  
*District Attorney, Director, Juvenile Division, OK County*  
 Invocation: Dr. Ted Kersh  
*Village Baptist Church*  
 Keynote Speaker: Gary Smalley  
 Governor Keating will also offer remarks
- 2:00 Success Story  
 Don and Martha Martin, Ada
- 2:10 Bobbie Burbridge Lane, The Burbridge Foundation  
*“Invitation for Community Participation”*
- 2:20 Interactive Sessions  
*“How can community leaders impact and promote marriage? What can we do to mobilize others?”*
- 3:10 Success Story  
 Harold and Dorothy Wilson, Lawton
- 3:15 Breakout Group Reports  
 Moderator: Jim Preist, Attorney, McKinney and Stringer
- 3:45 Question and Answer/Discussion
- 4:00 Introduction of David Ferguson, Ph.D.  
 Dr. Scottie Haskins, COPE, Inc.
- 4:05 David Ferguson, Ph.D., Intimate Life Ministries, Austin, Texas  
*“Can marriage as an institution be restored? Can communities be rebuilt through relationships? Where is the hope?”*
- 4:30 Closing Remarks: Jerry Regier  
*“Where do we go from here?”*

Agenda from Oklahoma Training for TANF Caseworkers

**Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Tier 1 Training**

Monday, September 10, 2001

University of Central Oklahoma, University Center constitution Hall  
100 University Dr., Edmond, OK

**Morning session**

- **Mary Myrick, Project Director for OMI**
- **Diane Sollee, Executive Director of the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education (CMFCE)**  
*The Promise of Prevention: Couples and Marriage Education*

**Break**

- **Scott Stanley Ph.D., Co-Director, Center for Martial and Family Studies, University of Denver**  
*Introduction to Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)*  
--Research basis and Key Elements of PREP  
--Speaker/Listener Technique

**Luncheon in Ballroom AB**

**Secretary Jerry Regier, moderator**

**Ron Haskins, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution and former Staff Director, Subcommittee on Human Resources, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives**

*Strengthening Marriage in the Nation & in Oklahoma: TANF, Couples, Fathers & Marriage*

**Howard Hendrick, Director of the Department of Human Services**  
*Oklahoma Perspectives on TANF and Marriage*

**Afternoon session**

**Linda Waite, Professor, Department of Sociology**  
**University of Chicago, co-author, *The Case for Marriage***  
**Why Marriage Matters: Benefits of marriage, negative impact of divorce**

**Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott, Oklahoma Marriage Ambassadors**  
*Marriage Mentoring: A Component of the OMI*

***Supporting the Marriage Initiative: Panel Discussion***

- Peggy Butcher, Programs Manager II, OK State Dept. of Human Services**
- Debra Andersen, Chief, Child Guidance Service/Family Health Services, Oklahoma State Dept. of Health**
- Lynda Harriman, Assistant Director/Associate Dean, Cooperative Extension Service**
- Kent Choate, Family Ministries Specialist, Baptist General Convention**

**Oklahoma Marriage Initiative Tier II  
Pilot Counties Referral Training**

Tuesday and Wednesday, September 11-12, 2001  
University of Central Oklahoma, University Center Constitution Hall  
100 N. University Drive, Edmond, OK

**Tuesday, September 11**

**Ron Haskins, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution and former Staff Director, Subcommittee on Human Resources, Committee on Ways and Means, U.S. House of Representatives**  
*Strengthening Marriage in the Nation and in Oklahoma: Challenges for front line staff*

**Break**

**Panel Discussion: Couples, Fathers and Marriage in Low Income Communities - *An overview of the issues***

- Hector Campos, Education & Training consultant, HJC & Associates**
- Marline Pearson, Social Science Instructor, Madison Area Technical College**
- Gladys Mosby, Family Advocacy Program Prevention Education Coordinator/Acting Family Advocacy Program Manager at Fort Polk Army Community Service, Fort Polk, LA**
- Marcia Smith, Executive Director, Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

**Afternoon session**

**Luncheon Speaker\*: Scott Stanley, Ph.D., Co-Director, Center for Marital**

and Family Studies, University of Denver  
*Overview of the Prevention & Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP)*  
**Box Lunches provided**

## **Break**

## **Tuesday Afternoon Workshops**

### **How to Understand and Strengthen Relationships in Low Income Populations**

Each workshop leader, drawing on their experience in different contexts will address in part the following questions:

- What are the key goals, stresses and barriers that affect relationships between low income men and women?
- Which adults are most likely to benefit from referrals to skills workshops?
- Can single mothers/fathers benefit as well as couples?
- How can we best talk with clients about their relationships?
- How specifically can/should we talk with men/fathers?

**Workshop 1, Hector J. Campos, *Men, Fathers and Relationships:***  
*A Multicultural Approach*

**Workshop 2, Marline Pearson, *Implementing PREP in Community-Based***  
*Settings*

**Workshop 3, Gladys Mosby, *Premarital/marriage skills workshops with young,***  
*low income military couples*

## **Meeting Adjourns**

Wednesday, September 12<sup>th</sup>

**Panel Discussion: Assessment, Referral and Community Resources**

Each panelist will address from their different perspectives the following questions:

- How to recognize potential strengths, and level of commitment to spouse/partner
- How to discuss barriers to relationship stability? (economic and psychological)
- How to recognize the red flag of depression, substance Abuse and domestic violence?
- How to respond to these client problems? What resources are available?

**Panelists: Scott Stanley, Marline Pearson, Glays Mosby, Marcia Smith, June Elkin, OK State Dept. of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services**

**Moderator: Theodora Ooms**

**Don Hebbard and Christine Johnson, Director, Bureau for Social Research, Oklahoma State University**

*Making it Happen at the County Level: Discussion and Q & A*

- The critical importance of data and evaluation
- The need for recording data on referrals and participation
- Creating a Countywide OMI Coordination and Support Team
- Identifying a team coordinator
- Methods of communication and support (email, newsletter, periodic meetings)
- Identifying specialized support services & resources (e.g. workshops sites: Possible donors)
- Getting the word out in the community