

ATTACHMENT A

The healthy marriage initiative is about helping couples, who choose marriage for themselves, develop the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages. Importantly, this initiative is NOT about the following: (1) it is not about telling people that they should be married, (2) it is not about trapping people in abusive marriages, and (3) it is not about withdrawing support for single mothers. Rather, the initiative is about providing couples with the skills necessary to form and sustain *healthy marriages*.

The following principles guide the responsible fatherhood initiative: (1) all fathers can be important contributors to the well-being of their children; (2) parents are partners in raising their children, even when they do not live in the same household; (3) the roles fathers play in families are diverse and related to cultural and community norms; (4) men should receive the education and support necessary to prepare them for the responsibility of parenthood; and (5) government can encourage and promote father involvement through its programs and through its own workforce policies.

Listed below are examples of activities to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood. These examples are organized into twelve categories and cover a diverse set of concrete activities such as classes, seminars, workshops, inventories, conferences, support groups, mentoring activities, and preventive counseling. They include faith-based and secular approaches designed for use before marriage or at any stage in marriage. They include activities to strengthen healthy marriages and activities to help troubled marriages.

TRAINING

- Training for program staff in why marriage matters, what to expect in marriage, the knowledge and skills necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage, and examples of marriage education programs and resources.
- Training for program participants and clients in why marriage matters, what to expect in marriage, and the knowledge and skills to make a healthy marriage a reality.
- Training for some program participants to be marriage program leaders, facilitators and mentors.
- Training experienced couples to be mentors, with or without a faith-based component, as a strategy to assist newly married couples, new parents, stepfamilies or other couples facing special challenges.

VOUCHERS

- Providing vouchers for registration and materials to program staff and participants who attend marriage education activities. For example, a young woman considering marriage could be given vouchers to take a premarital inventory with her boyfriend and a marriage education class, workshop, seminar or weekend. Similarly a newlywed couple, expecting their first child, could be given vouchers to attend a marriage education program.
- Providing vouchers for mediation services or marriage education programs designed for those having serious marital problems, prior to separation or divorce.

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION

- Distributing posters, brochures, magazines, calendars, or other marriage-related materials.
- Establishing a small lending library of books and videos on marriage for staff and clients.

ATTACHMENT A

- Disseminating lists of internet sites where people can find information, education and support regarding marriage.

COMMUNITY MARRIAGE INITIATIVES

- Establishing and sponsoring a Marriage Task Force in a local community that includes representatives from business, education, health, mental health, media, judicial, legal, the military and community and faith-based organizations.
- Developing and using a referral list of local marriage education programs and resources.
- Establishing institutional partnerships and collaboration networks with community mental health agencies, courts, local colleges and universities or the USDA's Extension Service regarding marriage education.
- Establishing partnerships with community and faith-based organizations to train couples to be mentors and to train leaders to organize "marriage saver" programs in their area. These community marriage initiatives will include marriage preparation programs, marriage enrichment programs, programs for "back-from-the-brink" couples, and programs for stepfamilies.

EVENTS

- Sponsoring training events on marriage education for local agencies.
- Hosting events for unmarried couples and weekly or monthly couples' nights with specific activities to encourage participation of couples. Provide child care if possible.
- Hosting a couples' night on a quarterly basis to celebrate marriage anniversaries and to provide brief educational activities that sustain healthy marriages.

PROGRAMS FOR NEWLYWEDS

- Designing programs with community-based and faith-based organizations that provide support for the newly married.

PARENTING PROGRAMS

- Including a marriage component in parenting programs.

RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

- Testing ways to disseminate information and education related to promoting and supporting healthy marriages to a local constituency.
- Gathering baseline data, establishing performance objectives and measures, and evaluating marriage education program activities.

INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT

- Providing marital health assessment quizzes and questionnaires with appropriate referrals when warranted.
- During intake, assessment, or follow-up interviews using a marriage protocol to ask about the marital relationship, in addition to parenting and other family relationships.

INTERNET

- Putting links to marriage web pages on the program web site.

ATTACHMENT A

- Subscribing to free e-mail newsletters.
- Investigating the opportunities for online learning for marriage education.

YOUTH

- Helping teenagers prepare for healthy dating relationships and marriage.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Identifying one staff member in each program office who will take the lead on marriage education activities.