

Marriage.gov: A Promising Public Policy

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Policy is...

Policy

- 1. A definite course or method of action selected from alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions; a high-level overall plan embracing the general goals and acceptable procedures especially of a governmental body. (MERRIAM-WEBSTER ONLINE)
- 2. The set of objectives and rules guiding the activities of an organization or an administration, and providing authority for allocation of resources. (Source: Green and Kreuter, 1991, *Health Promotion Planning: An Educational and Environmental Approach*)

Policy Development:

- 1. The means by which problem identification, technical knowledge of possible solutions and societal values converge to set a course of action (Institute of Medicine: The Future of Public Health, Washington, DC: The National Academy Press, 1988).
- 2. Policy development is a process that enables informed decisions to be made concerning issues related to the public's health. (Source: National Public Health Performance Standards Program, CDC, 2007, Acronyms, Glossary, and Reference Terms)

Priority

- 1. A thing that is regarded as more important than others. (Source: Oxford English Dictionary)
- 2. Alternatives ranked according to feasibility or value (importance) or both. (Source: Green and Kreuter, 1991, *Health Promotion Planning: An Educational and Environmental Approach*)

HMI Mission Statement

Helping couples, who have chosen marriage for themselves, gain greater access to marriage education services, on a voluntary basis, where they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage.

This initiative is *not* about

- Trapping anyone in an abusive relationship
- Forcing anyone to get or stay married
- Running a federal dating service
- Withdrawing supports from or diminishing in any way, either directly or indirectly, the important work of single parents

Giving Psychology and Family Science Away

- Secrets of a Strong Marriage
- Public Health Approach
- Universal/Primary Prevention

Mental Health Intervention Spectrum Model

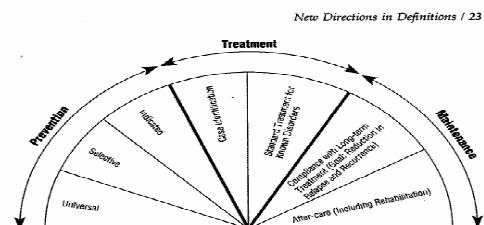


FIGURE 2.1 The mental health intervention spectrum for mental disorders.

In, Reducing risks for mental disorders: Frontiers for preventive intervention research, Mrazek, P.J. & Haggerty, R.J. Eds. (1994).

What are we trying to do?


Increase the percentage of children who grow up with a mom and a dad who are in a healthy marriage

Three Essentials of a Couples' Primary Coping System (according to David Mace)

- **Commitment** to ongoing growth and change
- Good **communication** skills
- Ability to deal creatively with inevitable **conflict** and anger in marriage

What Policymakers Say About Healthy Marriage

Many policymakers and government officials are interested in increasing and sustaining healthy marriages in the U.S. as a strategy to promote well-being. In this section we provide examples of how various policymakers have publicly discussed marriage. Please check back for updates, as we will expand in the future.



"To encourage marriage and promote the well-being of children, I have promulgated a healthy marriage initiative to help couples develop the skills and knowledge to sustain healthy marriages. Research has shown that, on average, children in households headed by married parents fare better than children who grow up in single-parent households. Through education and counseling programs, faith-based organizations, and government organizations promote healthy marriages and a better life for children. By supporting responsible child-rearing and strong families, my administration is seeking to ensure that every child can grow up in a safe and loving home."

President George W. Bush - February, 2002

President George W. Bush

- February 24, 2004 [Remarks at the Whitehouse](#)
- October 3, 2003 [Proclamation: National Marriage Protection Week](#)

Dr. Wade Horn - Former Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Lewis and Gossett (1999)
eight essential characteristics of a healthy marriage

- Power is shared
- There is a strong marital bond characterized by levels of both closeness and autonomy
- The spouses are interested in each other's thoughts and feelings
- The expression of feelings is encouraged
- The inevitable conflicts that do occur do not escalate or lead to despair
- Problem-solving skills are well developed
- Most basic values are shared
- The ability to deal with change and stress is well developed

Disarming The Past: How An Intimate Relationship Can Heal Old Wounds

CHILD TRENDS®
RESEARCH BRIEF

Publication # 2004-16 4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20014
Phone 202-572-6000 Fax 202-362-5533 www.childtrends.org

What Is "Healthy Marriage"? Defining the Concept

By Kristin Anderson Moore, Ph.D., Susan M. Jekielek, Ph.D., Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Ph.D., Lina Guzman, Ph.D., Suzanne Ryan, Ph.D., and Zakia Redd, M.P.P. September 2004

Overview Americans love books and movies that end with a couple exchanging vows and going on to live "happily ever after." We cry at weddings, and we admire couples of whom we can say, "They have a great marriage." And young people today continue to place great importance on a good marriage and family life.¹ At the same time, a considerable number of contemporary Americans have deep reservations about their prospects for marriage, the quality of a marriage they might enter, and the odds that their marriage will last.² Some even raise concern that marriage can be a trap and can expose women to domestic violence.³

Despite these divergent views and concerns, there is a lot of common ground. Most people, including unmarried parents, value marriage and want to be married.⁴ Moreover, research indicates that

Measurement Framework

Background	Antecedents	Definition	Consequences	
Social context, macro-level factors Family background characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment, income - Education - Physical health - Mental health - Stress - Social support - Substance use - Incarceration - Family background characteristics - Children from a prior relationship - Community context - Religiosity - Attitudes and values 	Healthy Marriage/Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Satisfaction - Communication - Interaction/time together - Commitment to the couple - Intimacy/emotional support - Conflict/conflict resolution - Violence - Fidelity - Commitment to the children - Duration and marital status 	Adult Well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment, income, wealth - Physical health - Mental health - Social support - Satisfaction and happiness - Risk-taking, substance use, illegal activities - Attitudes/values - Religiosity 	Child Well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-emotional outcomes - Cognitive attainment and educational achievement - Health and safety - Attitudes/values towards marriage and childbearing - Offspring dating behavior, sexual activity, and relationship skills - Marital stability in adulthood

Healthy Marriage/Relationships include these elements:

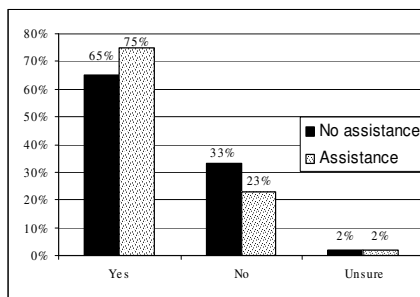
- Commitment of the couple
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Satisfaction
- Lack of domestic violence
- Fidelity
- Interaction/time together
- Intimacy/emotional support
- Commitment to the children
- Duration/legal marital status

<http://www.childtrends.org>

Healthy Marriage is Multidimensional

R:Umm...first I feel like there has to be a spiritual foundation, for me—a spiritual based foundation. Love. Deep commitment. Communication. Umm... a willingness to change whatever needs to be changed, to grow together. Umm...trust. And, a willingness to work.[African-American female, 42 years old]

Would you consider using relationship education, such as workshops or classes to strengthen your relationship?



Factor Associated with Fragile Families Moving Toward Marriage

from Carlson, McLanahan, & England

- Marriage more likely if fathers are rated as **“more supportive”** by mothers in these ways:
 - Father more fair and willing to compromise
 - Father expresses affection
 - Father less insulting or critical
 - Father encourages mother to do things that are important to her

Smart Marriages
Condition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education

For dozens of ARTICLES, click here! For Marriage Reports, Summaries see BELOW

Legislation
ARCHIVE of 12 years of the Smart Marriages LISTSERV (searchable by topic)
'Medical/Illness/Health' and Marriage Education articles

Marriage Reports and Research Summaries:

Marriage and family FACTS & STATS - <http://www.familyfacts.org>
A round-up of social science findings on healthy marriage/healthy family research gathered from peer-reviewed journals, books and government surveys. Serving policymakers, journalists, scholars and the general public, familyfacts.org makes social science research easily accessible to the non-specialist.

Why Marriage Matters, Second Edition: 26 Conclusions from the Social Sciences
Marriage & Family Wellbeing: Corporate America's Business? - The Marriage Collusion, 2006
Does Divorce Make People Happy? - Institute for American Values
Marriage and Health - HHS Report, 2007
What is the Relationship of Marriage to Physical Health? - Jena Stinson, 2008
Cohabitation, Marriage and Child Wellbeing: A Cross-National Perspective
David Popenoe, The National Marriage Project, June 2008

Cultivating Healthy Relationships and Marriages: An On-line Training on Effective Programming

The following presentations were developed as part of the Ohio State University Family Life Electronics Seminar on Relationship and Marital Enrichment Education. These papers were later published in The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues and included in the Cultivating Healthy Couple and Marital Relationships: A Guide to Effective Programming.

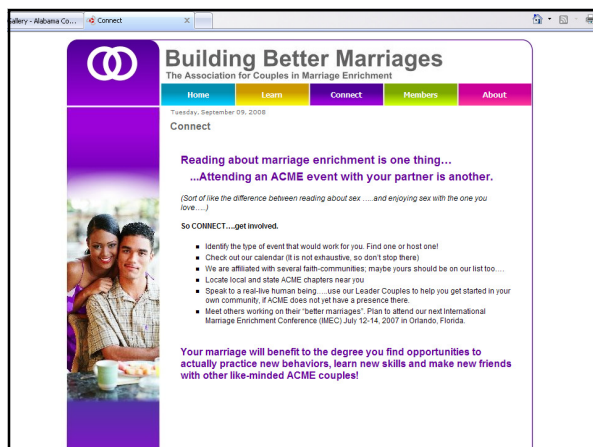
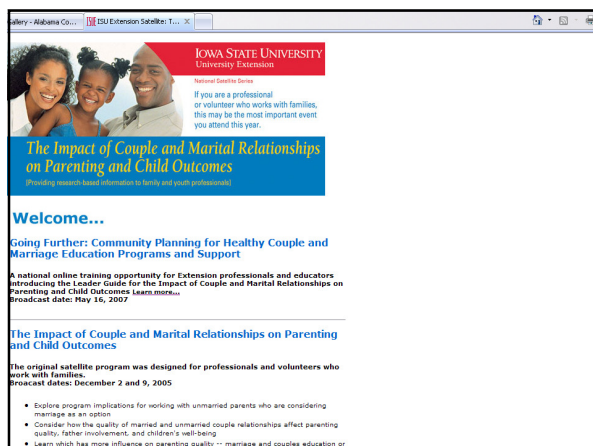
For more information about the presentations, please contact Ted Futris, Family Life Extension Specialist at the University of Georgia.

What's Love Got to Do With It? The Role of Healthy Relationships and Marriages in Promoting Healthy Children, Families and Communities

Authors: Francesca Adler-Baeder and Karen Shriver

- Presentation (40 minutes)
- PowerPoint Slides
- Transcript with References
- Supplemental Reading 1 - National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network (NERMEN)
- Supplemental Reading 2 - Annotated Bibliography

A Framework for Using Research and Evaluation in Marriage



ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

- Public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and the skills needed to increase marital stability and health.
- Education in high schools on the value of marriage, relationship skills, and budgeting.
- Marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs, that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement, for non-married pregnant women and non-married expectant fathers.
- Divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills.

ALLOWABLE ACTIVITIES

- Pre-marital education and marriage skills training for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage.
- Marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples.
- Marriage mentoring programs which use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.
- Programs to reduce the disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any activity described in this subparagraph.

The HM Demo Grant Announcement said:

“The curriculum used must be designed to help couples learn and apply skills that will:

- Improve **communication** between couples,
- Improve the couple's ability to **resolve** their **conflicts**, and
- Strengthen the couple's **commitment** to increasing marital stability.”

Marriage Education Curriculum Assessment Guide

Info	Skills to Activities	Minimum Required Content
		Commitment to healthy marriage (for current or future relationships) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Role of commitment, long-term plans on relationship qualities, dynamics• Perspectives and attitudes to relationship
		Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listening and/or speaking skills, effective communication dynamics• Body language, non-verbal communication
		Conflict Resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dealing with tensions, events, disagreements, quarrels and arguments• Spending and taking skills to reduce verbal conflict, escalation• Safety about marriage or family (cultural and/or faith-based)• Attitudes, views, values about marriage or family life related to couple relationship
		Benefits of marriage (the adults, children, community and society) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact on mental and social well-being: economic, education, and health outcomes, social indicators, finances, crime rates, etc.• Role of marriage in society and culture(s), marriage as a social institution
		Qualities of healthy, relationships and healthy marriage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research based qualities, characteristics and aspects of healthy relationships and healthy marriages• Values, attitudes associated with long-term, low-conflict partnerships
		Total number of choices across each Minimum Required Content column

Healthy Marriage Initiative

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Healthy Marriage Initiative

"Our emphasis is on healthy marriages — not marriage for the sake of marriage, not marriage at any cost — but healthy marriages that provide a strong and stable environment for raising children. It is about helping couples who choose marriage for themselves gain access to the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages." Wade E. Horn, Ph.D. former Assistant Secretary, ACF

General Information

- Background
- Mission Statement
- Goals
- Allowable Activities
- The ACF Healthy Marriage Initiative is Not About...
- Benefits of a Healthy Marriage

News and Events

- Testimonial from the Fresno County Healthy Marriage Coalition (with video 6 minutes)
- Build Strong Families (BSF) Video (with video 10 minutes)
- Comprehensive List of Healthy Marriage Education Programs (PDF 200KB)

Healthy Marriage Matters

- African American Healthy Marriage Initiative
- Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative
- Native American Healthy Marriage Initiative

Research

- Government-sponsored Research
- Other Research

Funding Opportunities

- OCA Healthy Marriage and Fatherhood Initiatives
- Current Funding Opportunities
- Currently Funded ACF Healthy Marriage Projects
- Past Funding
- Past Projects

Practitioner Resources

- ACF Publications
- ACF Reports
- ACF Webinars

CLASP.org

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CLASP
CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

Couples and Marriage Policy

CLASP focuses on a "Marriage-Plus" perspective, which has two main goals centered on the well-being of children: (1) to help more children grow up with their two biological, married parents whose relationship is healthy; (2) when this isn't possible, to help parents—whether unmarried, cohabiting, separated, divorced, or remarried—cooperate better in raising their children.

2006 Publications

- Building Bridges Between Healthy Marriage, Responsible Fatherhood, and Domestic Violence Programs: A Preliminary Guide by Theodora Doms, Paula Roberts, Anne Menard et al. This guide summarizes the lessons learned at the Building Bridges Wingspread Conference, held in May 2006. This conference brought together leaders from three fields—healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, and domestic violence—to discuss current tensions and concerns, identify common ground, and discuss possible avenues for cooperation, collaboration, and joint action, avenues that would result in better outcomes for children and adults alike. 19 pages. 12/7/2006

Publications by Type

- Reports
- Policy Briefs
- Fact Sheets
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CLASP POLICY BRIEF
CENTER FOR LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY

Couples and Marriage Series March 2007
Brief No.10

Adapting Healthy Marriage Programs for Disadvantaged and Culturally Diverse Populations: What are the issues?

By Theodora Doms

Introduction

A decade ago marriage was the "m-word" in the U.S. public arena, viewed as a private matter beyond government intervention. Now, marriage is a public issue, and a dedicated stream of funding in the reauthorized Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. In addition, a handful of state governments have used state dollars to fund HMI.

how to deal with domestic violence issues.

The author would like to thank the following individuals for very helpful comments on a draft of this brief: Bill Coffin, Nanney Campbell, David Fein, Courtney Harrison, Kenneth Meier, and Pamela White.

Healthy Marriage Initiative: What is the African American Community's Role?

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HEALTHY MARRIAGE INITIATIVE (HMI)

Marriage Matters to ACF

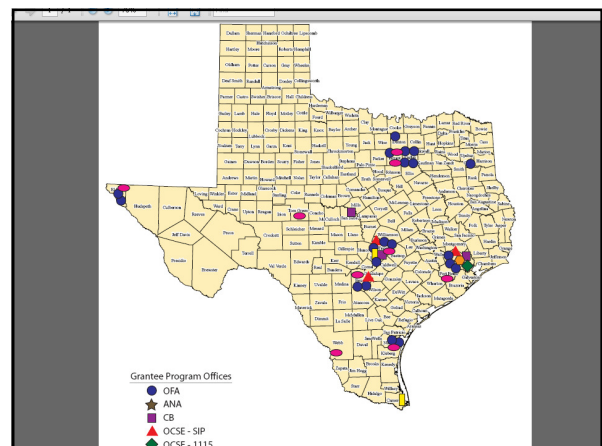
proposed a Healthy Marriage Initiative to help couples, who have chosen marriage for themselves, gain access to services where the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages.

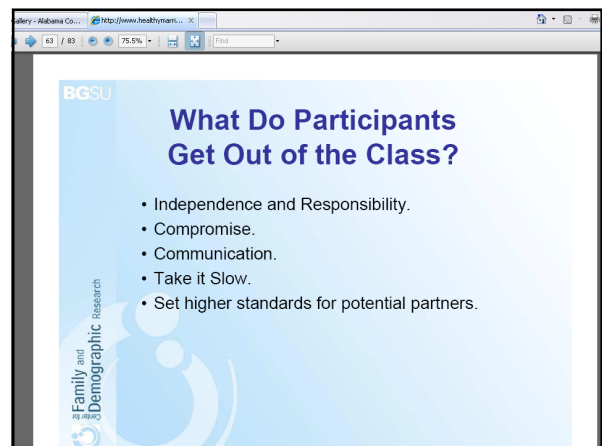
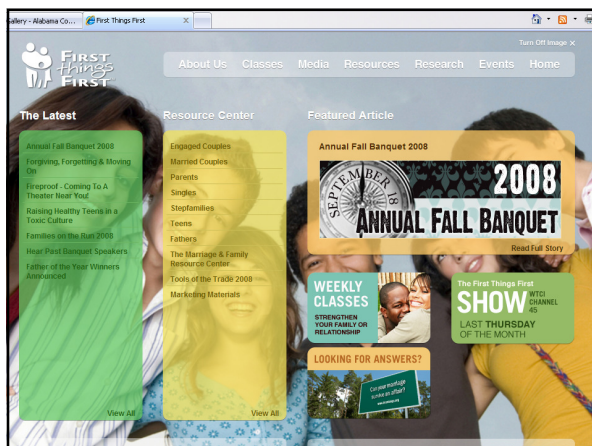
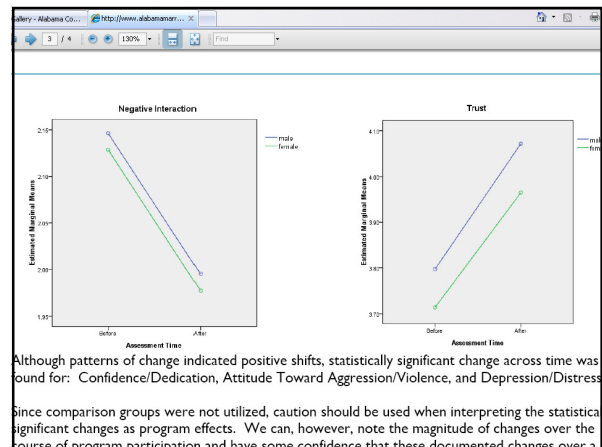
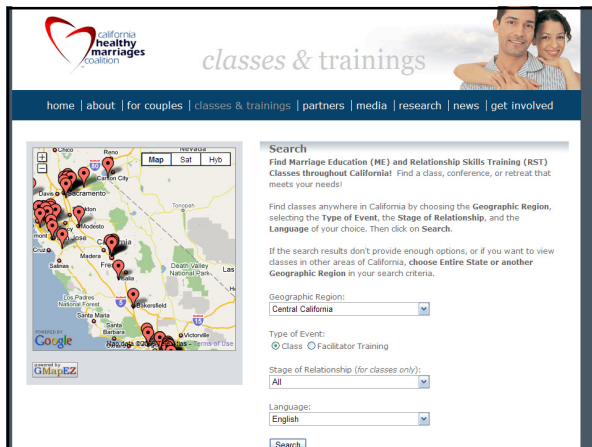
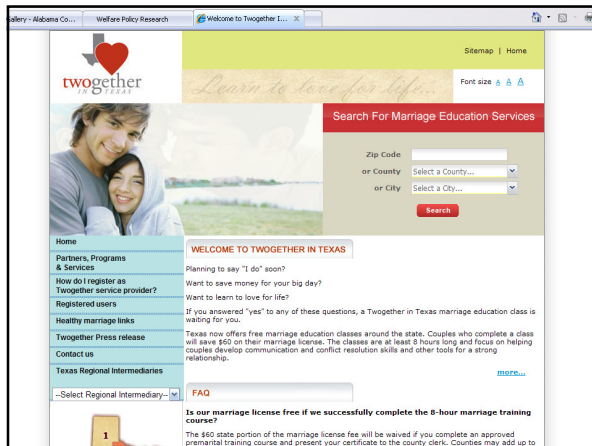
search that indicates that two-parent, married families represent the ideal environment for raising children, Congress included nation, and fatherhood as key elements in the PRWORA of 1996 (welfare reform legislation, TANF).

ed strategy within the Healthy Marriage Initiative. The goal of the HMI is to address the unique cultural, linguistic, demographic, and socio-economic issues in Hispanic communities.

Resources

- Healthy Marriage Initiative (HMI)
- Spanish Version
- Latino Data: Matrimonios Hispanos Saludables
- Marriage Matters to ACF





BGSU

Lessons Learned: Compromise

- Respondents learned that they have to consider the feelings of others and work together to build upon their relationships.

"And relationships is no one-way street. It's no one person's right or one person's wrong. You have to sit down and talk about it, and talk like that."

"Umm, that it's not all about me. That I need to have a compromising attitude."

Family and Demographic Research

Marriages Grand Rapids

Home » About HMGR » A Message from Senator Bill Hardiman, Chair HMGR

A Message from Senator Bill Hardiman, Chair HMGR

Today in our country, a major topic of discussion is how to improve our educational system in America. However, I believe the first and most important classroom is the home. It is in the context of home and family that the most basic values are learned; values that guide us throughout our lives. The best teaching team is a loving father and mother. This truth is reflected in the old saying,

"And these words... shall be upon your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise."

These crucial lessons are not only taught with words but by the examples of caring parents. Many single parents are heroically trying to provide this "classroom" by themselves, but it's very difficult. There are many statistics that support the fact that children who are born and raised in a healthy two-parent family have a much better chance at life. They have lower rates of teenage pregnancy, delinquency, school drop out rates, substance abuse and many other social ills. As we enter the new millennium, one of the most positive things we can do for children is to increase the number of children who are born and raised in healthy, two-parent families. As supporters of HMGR let us strive to make our own homes the "first classroom" where values are taught. Let us be examples of that best teaching team of a loving mother and father. This is important for the next generation and the generations to come.

Home - National Healthy Marriage Resource Center - Microsoft Internet Explorer

Address: http://www.healthy marriages.org/

national healthy marriage resource center

Strengthening Families, Communities, and a Nation - One Marriage at a Time

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Welcome to the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center!

We strive to be your "first-stop shop" for information on healthy marriages! Here you can find information to help sustain your healthy marriage, read up on the latest research, find facts and figures, get help with your healthy marriage program, learn how to start your own community initiative and much more!

Look for the information by clicking on the buttons on the left, or by searching our extensive [library](#). We add tools and information regularly. Check back often and [subscribe](#) to our email alert. Be the first to know when we add new resources.

A Message from President Bush on Healthy Marriage

The Couples' Corner

- Preparing for Marriage
- What is a Healthy Marriage?
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Marriage Matters

Cheap Dates to Strengthen your Marriage
Time alone together is a must for a healthy marriage. Check out these inexpensive ideas for some "double one-on-one." [More...](#)

Marriage Myths Debunked
Think married people have less sex than singles? Think again. [More...](#)

Have what it takes to have a healthy marriage?

Welfare Policy Research

National Center for Marriage Research

Bowling Green State University

RESEARCH AND PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS:
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The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has established the first-ever National Center for Marriage Research (NCMR) through a cooperative agreement with Bowling Green State University. The National Center for Marriage Research aims to improve our understanding of how marriage and family structure affect the health and well-being of individuals, families, children and communities, and inform policy development and programmatic responses. In addition to supporting interdisciplinary research on marriage and family structure, the NCMR is developing research capacity and widely disseminating findings.

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United States Department of Health & Human Services

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

26 records match your search on "Healthy Marriage" - Showing 1 to 10

The Effects of Marriage on Health: (Report)
A Synthesis of the Research Evidence
Author(s): Robert G. Wood, Brian Goessling, Sarah Avellar
Organization(s): Mathematica Policy Research
This report synthesizes current research on the relationship between marital status and healthy behaviors, health status and health and substance use, health care access and utilization, and intergenerational health effects. It focuses on recent U.S. carefully address selection and causality and were published in peer-reviewed journals since 1990.
Published: June, 2007
Availability: Full HTML Version Full PDF Version Research Brief PDF Research Brief

Marriage Education, Financial Literacy, and Asset Development Roundtable: (Report)
Meeting Summary
Author(s): Elise Corwin, Anupa Bir, Pam Joshi, and Bob Leman
Organization(s): RTI International and Urban Institute
This report summarizes a Roundtable Meeting convened by ASPE in February 2008. The Roundtable brought together research practitioners from the marriage education, financial literacy, and asset development fields to begin a dialogue on the relationship between healthy marriages and financial practices. Discussion centered on how to improve programmatic efforts and encourage collaborative fields to address long-term family and economic stability. Research needs and collaborative opportunities were also explored.
Published: July, 2008
Availability: Full HTML Version Full PDF Version

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The Taxpayer Costs of Divorce: First-Ever Estimates for the Nation and for All Fifty States
Report, April 2008

Executive Summary

THIS STUDY PROVIDES THE FIRST RIGOROUS ESTIMATE of the costs to U.S. taxpayers of high rates of divorce and unmarried childbearing both at the national and state levels.

Why should legislators and policymakers care about marriage? Public debate on marriage in this country has focused on the "social costs" of family fragmentation (that is, divorce and unmarried childbearing), and research suggests that these are indeed extensive. But marriage is more than a moral or social institution; it is also an economic one, a generator of social and human capital, especially when it comes to children.

Research on family structure suggests a variety of mechanisms, or processes, through which marriage may reduce the need for costly social programs. In this study, we adopt the simplifying and extremely cautious assumption that all of the taxpayer costs of divorce and unmarried childbearing stem from the effects that family

The Future of the Black Family
New research & resources

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 - Elizabeth Marquardt
 - Stephen A. Brown
 - Shirley
 - Maggie Gallagher
 - Dr. Bradford Wilson
- By Topic



Research and Evaluation

- ACF Conducting Three Major Healthy Marriage Education Research Projects:
 - Building Strong Families (BSF)

http://www.buildingstrongfamilies.info
 - Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM)

http://www.supportinghealthymarriages.org
 - Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives (CHMI)

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/strengthen/eval_com/index.html

