

Healthy Marriage and Family Formation Training Project

Literature Review

**Institute for Families at the University of Denver
Learning Systems Group**

September 30, 2004

**Healthy Marriage and Family Formation
Training Project
Literature Review**

Table of Contents

<u>Child Welfare Population: Teens And Teen Parents</u>	3
<u>Child Welfare Population: Fathers</u>	4
<u>Relationship Status/Family Structure/Service Array</u>	7
<u>Marriage Education/Preparation/Enrichment</u>	8
<u>Catholic Marriage Prep For Poor (NACFLM)</u>	15
<u>Healthy Marriage And Fugitive Literature, Fragile Families, Low-Income Families, Marriage Education</u>	17
<u>Substance Abuse</u>	26
<u>Domestic Violence</u>	27
<u>Attachment 1: Family Structure In Child Welfare: Principal Caregivers, Foster Families, And Adoptive Families.</u>	30

Literature Subset Summaries and Articles Reviewed

Child Welfare Population: Teens and Teen Parents

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? Three articles on teen fathers and their involvement or lack thereof with their children.

What did we learn? The literature on teen fathers is similar to the literature on fathers in general. Young men need a different type of intervention than young women, even when it comes to pregnancy prevention and that most systems are geared towards working with mothers.

Articles/programs to highlight/cite. “Involving Males in Preventing Teen Pregnancy” has information on a number of programs that are successfully working with young men in the area of pregnancy prevention. Information from these programs in regards to how the programs are set up, and the lessons learned from these programs should be very helpful in developing modules on pregnancy postponement for teens, and even relationship development for teen and teen parenting.

Articles Reviewed

Sonenstein, F., Stewart, K., Duberstein, L., & Pernas, M. (1997). *Involving males in preventing teen pregnancy: a guide for program planners*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

✓ Program Review

Article Summary: Provides some historical perspective and then reviews about 20 prevention programs that have successfully been implemented.

Other Comments: In-depth information on the programs that may be useful in development of a training module.

Levin-Epstein, J. (2003, December). Teen Parents and Abstinence Education: Research Findings. *CLASP Publication 03-87*.

✓ Research review

Article Summary: This compilation of summaries of new research is designed as a reference tool for practitioners, policymakers, and others interested in teen parents (and particularly their relationship to welfare programs) and abstinence education.

Other Comments: Contains summaries from the different research papers. This article is probably not very helpful for our purposes.

Speak, S., Cameron, S., & Gilroy, R. (1997). Young, single, non-residential fathers: their involvement in fatherhood. *Social Policy Research*, 137.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: A small study by Newcastle University that investigates a group of single, non-residential, non-custodial fathers age 16 to 24 who did not want to be involved with their children.

Other Comments: Small sample size (40), but there is good information from the young men. The article provides some good insight.

Child Welfare Population: Fathers

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? Nine articles on fatherhood and the child welfare system.

What did we learn? From the literature that was reviewed, it appears that although fathers or male figures are responsible for a considerable amount of abuse and neglect, and even though literature suggests that the presence of fathers is important to the growth and development of children, the child welfare system does not do a very good job of engaging fathers. Some literature even suggests that caseworkers avoid fathers in a variety of ways. The literature also suggests that the child welfare system needs to make adaptations to become more father friendly agency wide and to train workers to become more father friendly.

Articles/programs to highlight/cite. “Expanding the Goals of ‘Responsible Fatherhood’ Policy” and “Getting Noncustodial Dads Involved in the Lives of Foster Children” both have good information on practice changes and suggestions of how the system could do a better job of engaging fathers.

Articles Reviewed

Stosny, S. (2003). Domestic violence: a crisis of disconnection. *National Fatherhood Initiative Newsletter*.

Article Summary: General article that urges connection of fathers to children to inhibit violence.

Other Comments: This article is opinion based.

Baron, J., & Sylvester, K. *Expanding the goals of “responsible fatherhood” policy*. Social Policy Action Network and the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Policy Recommendations

Article Summary: Based on interviews with low-income fathers and practitioners who work with low-income fathers conducted in Austin Texas, Columbus Ohio, Minneapolis Minnesota and Philadelphia Pennsylvania. The goal of the project was to identify the challenges facing low-income fathers seeking to support their children and to identify challenges facing public and private agencies working to help fathers reach that goal. Recommendations are made for Congress, State legislatures and State-run and nonprofit programs.

Lane, W. (2002, Summer). Fathers and child maltreatment: findings from the longitudinal studies of child abuse and neglect. *Best Practice/Next Practice*, pp. 8-10.

- ✓ Review of literature

Article Summary: This article looks at three studies from the LONGSCAN consortium related to the father’s role in child maltreatment. One study examines the relationship between the presence of a father surrogate in the home and the risk of maltreatment. The next examines the fathers’ and father figures’ potential influence on health and behavioral outcomes for children reported to CPS and the third study examines the

effect of father on the functioning of six-year-old children enrolled in any of the LONGSCAN sites.

Greif, G. & Zuravin, S. (1989). Fathers: a placement resource for abused and neglected children. *Child Welfare*, LXVIII (5).

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Implications for practice

Article Summary: Virtually no information has been found regarding fathers as placement resources for their abused and neglected children. This exploratory study of 17 custodial and 18 non-custodial fathers addresses how fathers get custody and how situations where fathers get custody differ from those where they do not. Discussion focuses on implications for practice and future research.

Other Comments: This study is old and very small. It speculates that women (not just mothers) play a large role in fathers obtaining custody.

Sonenstein, F., Malm, K., & Billing, A. *Study of fathers' involvement in permanency planning and child welfare casework*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

- ✓ Literature review
- ✓ AFCAR data

Article Summary: The review is organized around a number of pressing questions that policy makers interested in child welfare services would like answered. For each of the following questions we summarize current knowledge and identify information gaps.

Kahkonen, P. (1997). From the child welfare trap to the foster care trap. *Child Welfare*, 76 (3).

- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This study analyzed the visibility of mother, father/partner, and child(ren) in child welfare practice during the placement process, using ethnographic content analysis of case records. Little information concerning the quality of the parent-child relationship before the placement of the child was found. Social workers worked with mothers as the main clients, while fathers/partners and children were less visible in case handling than the mothers. The construct of the foster care trap was introduced to highlight the fact that eventually mothers were also neglected by the workers; after the placement of the child, social workers focused on the foster family. Along with the parent-child relationship breakdown, marital relationships broke down as well.

Maim, K. (2003, November). *Getting noncustodial dads involved in the lives of foster children*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Policy Implications
- ✓ AFCAR data

Article Summary: This study looks at data on children in foster care, children involved with child welfare, and children in the general population and shows that fathers with children in foster care are less likely to have financial support or emotional support from their fathers than the other two groups. It also discusses policy and practice implications for the child welfare system.

Franck, E. (2001). Outreach to birthfathers of children in out-of-home care. *Child Welfare*, 80 (3).

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Implications for practice

Article Summary: This article presents findings from a study of casework outreach to birthparents of children in out-of-home care. The study explored whether the birthfather was being ignored as a resource for discharge planning. It examined the outreach and interventions of caseworkers in three New York City out-of-home care agencies. Casework activity levels were found to be higher for birthmothers than for birthfathers, and a complex relationship among the variables of gender, outreach, and response was revealed. The nature and value of more specific outreach toward birth fathers of children in care and the risk of ignoring men in the birth family system are discussed.

Other Comments: Like other studies, this one does not address the many “whys” of working with fathers.

O’Donnell, J. Paternal involvement in kinship foster care services in one father and multiple father families. *Child Welfare*, LXXXX (4).

- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Using data from case records and from questionnaires completed by caseworkers, this article describes contact between 132 fathers of children in kinship foster care and their caseworkers over a period of 12 months, and the fathers’ involvement in permanency planning for their children. The data indicate that most fathers had no contact with the caseworkers during the period under study and had never participated in planning. Analysis revealed that paternal involvement varied significantly by the child’s family composition. Fathers of two or more children from a one-father family were most involved, while fathers of one child from a multiple-father family were least involved. Possible explanations for the findings are identified and implications for practice and research are presented.

National Family Preservation Network. *Position Paper on Fatherhood in the Child Welfare System*.

- ✓ Literature Review

Article Summary: This comprehensive review of the literature suggests that fathers, when considered at all, are viewed in a negative way in the child welfare system, and with perhaps the exception of child support, has made little effort to become involved with the fatherhood movement. The child welfare system has no identifiable models or written materials on engaging and involving fathers, and no training programs for child welfare workers. The purpose of this paper is to begin to address this huge void, discuss in greater detail what is known about fathers, and how this research and information might be applied to the child welfare system. It includes information on: key defining issues in fatherhood; fatherhood and ASFA; public policy and funding; best practices/model programs; controversies and barriers and family centered approach.

Other Comments: Good overview

O’Hagan, K. (1997). The problem of engaging men in child protection work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 27, 25-42.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Implications for practice

Article Summary: Child protection workers often concentrate upon mothers, and ignore or avoid fathers and male cohabiters. This article attempts to explore such tendencies, with the help of literature, research and the author's own experiences. It asks: when does this ignoring and avoidance take place? How and why is it done, and what are the likely consequences for child, mother, father/male partner, and child protection worker?

Relationship Status/Family Structure/ Service Array

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? We looked at data elements in the 2001 AFCARS data (incidentally, 2002 data will be available in about two week). The assignment was to determine what we could learn about the family structure of the following families involved with the public child welfare system:

- ◆ Principal caregiver families (the CPS families)
- ◆ Kinship care families
- ◆ Foster families
- ◆ Adoptive families

We did not do a separate AFCARS run on the structure of kinship care families. The National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare informed us that while there is a data element in AFCARS for this information, it is not reliable. AFCARS does differentiate between relative and non-relative care, but this data element has two problems: it is not used reliably across all States, and also, if there is no payment made to kinship care families by the child welfare agency (for example, informal care), those families are often not counted by the States.

What did we learn? See Attachment 1 for a national summary and a breakdown of our three pilot States (Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming). We actually learned a couple of very interesting things.

First, there are a lot more couples (married and unmarried) in the system than we might have assumed. For example, in 2001, there were almost 700,000 families involved with the child welfare system. Of this total, close to 200,000 were couples (118,000 married and 68,000 unmarried). Of course the vast majority were single female families (311,000), but we have no way of knowing how many of these women are involved in a relationship with another adult.

A couple family structure is, of course, the largest family structure representation for both adoptive and foster families. Married couples made up 60 percent of the adoptive families in 2001.

One other surprise, which does not relate to our project, but which is very disturbing is the fact that in 2001, there were a total of nearly 805,000 children removed from their birth families. But nearly 214,000, or over 20 percent, were not in family care—they were in group or institutional care.

Data Reviewed

Adoptive Families: 2001 AFCARS Data

Data Summary: In 2001, there were 50,940 adoptions from the child welfare system in the US. The vast majority of adoptive families were married couples (30,874, followed by single female adoptions (13,739), single male adoptions (1,033), and unmarried

couples (637). There were 4,657 not applicable which means it was missing data. The attached summary chart has the breakdown for adoptive family structures in 2001 for the three pilot states: Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming.

CPS Families: 2001 AFCARS Data

Data Summary: In 2001, there were 697,211 families involved with the child welfare system. Looking at these families' structures, the largest was single female household (311,426), followed by married couples (117,621), unmarried couples (67,831), and single males (28,942). However, the data was missing for 171,390 cases. The attached summary chart has the breakdown for CPS family structures in 2001 for the three pilot states: Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming.

Foster Families: 2001 AFCARS Data

Data Summary: In 2001, 804,629 children in alternate care in the United States. Most were in family care (see the next paragraph and the discussion about kinship care): 307,588 children were placed with married couples, followed by single female families (180,441), single males (21,489), and unmarried couples (10,166). However, no data was available on the placements of 171,316 children. It is interesting to note that 213,639 children were not in family care—they were in group or institutional care. The attached summary chart has the breakdown for foster family structures in 2001 for the three pilot states: Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming.

Note: We did not do a separate AFCARS run on the structure of kinship care families. The National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare informed us that while there is a data element in AFCARS for this information, it is not reliable. AFCARS does differentiate between relative and non-relative care, but this data element has two problems: it is not used reliably across all States, and also, if there is no payment made to kinship care families by the child welfare agencies (for example, in informal care), those families often are not “counted” by States.

Marriage Education/Preparation/Enrichment

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? I reviewed 21 articles that contained information about marriage education/preparation and/or enrichment. My intent was to identify what evidence existed to support promotion of marriage education/preparation/enrichment as a whole, and then to identify what evaluation had done to more narrowly identify “for whom, by whom, how long any benefits remain, which programs are most effective, etc.”

What did we learn? Evidence from these 21 articles and meta literature reviews include over 29 peer-reviewed social science journal articles indicating that marriage education, training, and counseling programs significantly strengthened marriage. Results show that the average couple participating in a marriage enhancement program is better off than more than two-thirds of nonparticipating couples, making advances in communication skills, marital satisfaction, and other relationship qualities. Premarital inventory questionnaires and counseling appear effective in preventing marital distress. Results indicate that marriage programs are effective and can help marriages thrive when couples, irrespective of socioeconomic class, learn the skills to make their relationship work.

It is very clear that the only program with serious, ongoing evaluation and research is the PREP program. Although PAIRS, RE, and Couples Communication have been the

subject of a few more recent studies, the majority of the published work supporting these programs was done in the 1980's and early 1990's.

PREP, on the other hand, has been fairly rigorous in the design and conduct of evaluation. Researchers have examined the program's effectiveness in different languages, with different populations (i.e. military), with different leaders (i.e. university, clergy, lay leaders), with focus on content, and over time (4 and 5 year follow-up).

Additional and ongoing evaluation of programs being offered through federal and local marriage initiatives is critical if the hope is to effect broad change in specific populations.

Articles Reviewed

Accordino, M. P., Guernsey, B. G., Jr. (2003). Relationship enhancement couples and family outcome research of the last 20 years. *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 11 (2), 162-66.

- ✓ 20 years of research on Relationship Enhancement

Article Summary: Twenty years of outcome research conducted on Relationship Enhancement (RE) couples and family therapy are reviewed. Studies testing RE with premarital and marital couples as well as special populations, such as college roommates, are included. Effect sizes are included to provide further information on the comparison of treatment to control groups. Implications for practitioners and research are discussed.

Other Comments: No testing on special populations of color or different socio-economic groups.

Fagan, P.F., Patterson, R.W., Rector, R.E. (2002). *Marriage and Welfare Reform: The Overwhelming Evidence That Marriage Education Works*. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation.

- ✓ Literature review
- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Policy statements

Article Summary: The erosion of marriage has caused enormous difficulties for children, parents, and society. Compared to children born within marriage, those born outside of marriage are overwhelmingly more likely to live in poverty, depend on welfare, and have behavior problems. They also may suffer depression and physical abuse, fail in school, abuse drugs, and end up in jail. In response, the 1996 welfare reform law set a national goal to help increase and strengthen two-parent families, offering programs to teach relationship skills to unmarried couples at time of pregnancy and marriage skills to low-income married couples. Evidence from 29 peer-reviewed social science journal articles indicated that marriage education, training, and counseling programs significantly strengthened marriage. Results show that the average couple participating in a marriage enhancement program is better off than more than two-thirds of nonparticipating couples, making advances in communication skills, marital satisfaction, and other relationship qualities. Premarital inventory questionnaires and counseling appear effective in preventing marital distress. Results indicate that marriage programs are effective and can help marriages thrive when couples, irrespective of socioeconomic class, learn the skills to make their relationship work. An appendix presents information on understanding effect size and meta-analysis. (Contains 29 references.)

Other Comments: Useful for 29 peer review articles on topic.

Lerman, R.I. (2002). *Impacts of marital status and parental presence on the material hardship of families with children*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

- ✓ Evaluative Report
- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This study investigated how marriage, cohabitation, single parenthood, and the presence of biological parents affected the incomes and material hardships of children. Data from the 1997 and 1999 National Survey of America's Families were used to examine recent changes in the marital status and household structure of families with children, how levels of income and material hardship varied by family structure, and whether marriage acted to reduce marital hardship, even among families with low incomes and among children of less-educated mothers. Results indicated that net of education, race, immigrant status, age, and age and number of children, married couple families achieved significantly lower poverty levels than other family types, including families with at least two potential earners. Even among the poor, material hardships were significantly lower among married couple families with children than among other families with children, including those with at least two potential earners. Marriage impacts were quite large, and generally higher than the effects of education. Impacts were particularly high among non-Hispanic black families. (Contains 14 tables and 21 references.)

Rector, R., Johnson, K.A, & Fagan, P.F. (2002). *The effect of marriage on child poverty*. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Editorial commentary

Article Summary: This report examines what share of the current level of child poverty in the United States can be attributed to the growth of single parenthood since the 1960s, focusing on what the child poverty rate would be today if single parent families had remained at the levels that existed before the beginning of the war on poverty. Researchers simulated the effects of higher marriage rates using data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the year 2000. They matched a portion of single parents with potential spouses who were identical in age, race, and educational level, then hypothetically joined these couples into one household and determined whether they would be poor based on the couple's combined income. Results found that the decline of marriage since the 1960s has been a substantial factor behind the current high levels of child poverty. Child poverty would be nearly a third lower today if the traditional two-parent family had not deteriorated over the past 3 decades. The results show that when poor single mothers are married to single men of similar age, race, and education, their marriage lifts the family out of poverty in about 80 percent of the cases. (Contains eight tables and two charts.)

Hafen, M. Jr., & Crane, D.R. (2003). When marital interaction and intervention researchers arrive at different points of view: The active listening controversy. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 25 (1), 4-14.

- ✓ Discussion of technique
- ✓ Comment

Article Summary: In 1998, John Gottman & his associates published an article that asserted that training 'active listening' between couples was an ineffective therapeutic intervention. Not surprisingly, this claim generated considerable controversy, particularly in relation to treatment & educational models that were heavily dependent

on active listening as a major part of their intervention programs. The authors of one such approach, the Prevention & Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), were particularly vocal in their disagreement with Gottman's conclusions. This paper provides an account of the controversy, a summary of the current status of the debate & a discussion of the remaining unanswered questions. 22 References. Adapted from the source document.

Other Comments: Controversy we should be aware of.

Halpern, A. (1999). Poverty among children born outside of marriage: preliminary findings from the national survey of America's families. *Discussion Papers: Assessing the New Federalism: An Urban Institute Program To Assess Changing Social Policies*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This study examines whether children born outside of marriage and currently living in single-mother families are more likely to be poor than children in single-mother families who were born to married parents. Using the 1997 National Survey of America's Families, the study finds that among children living with single mothers, those born outside of marriage are 1.7 times more likely to be poor than those born to married parents. While this difference is statistically significant and non-negligible, differences in mother's education and work status and whether she lives with other adult relatives are all stronger predictors of child poverty. Nevertheless, given that children born outside of marriage are persistently more likely to be poor than other children living in single-mother families, even when a mother's characteristics are taken into account, a continued policy focus on children born to unmarried mothers is warranted. (Contains 16 references.)

Durana, C. (1997). Enhancing marital intimacy through psychoeducation: The PAIRS program. *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 5 (3), 204-215.

✓ Evaluation of PAIRS

Article Summary: This article explores intimacy enhancement through a psycho-educational method, the Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS) Program. Participants were more distressed and less intimate than the general population. Clients' perceptions of intimacy and what maintains intimacy were measured. Findings suggest a multifaceted view of intimacy. Significant gains were sustained in follow-up period while gender differences had reduced. Intimacy appears to be a skill that can be learned.

Thomas, E.J, Adams, K.B., Yoshioka, M. R., Ager, R.D. (1990). Unilateral relationship enhancement in the treatment of spouses of uncooperative alcohol abusers. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 18 (4), 334-344.

✓ Evaluation

✓ Research

Article Summary: Described is the design & implementation of a unilateral relationship enhancement (URE) program developed for use with the spouses of alcohol abusers unmotivated to enter treatment. Improving the marital relationship through URE is argued to be an important step in preparing the spouse to function as a positive rehabilitative influence with the alcohol-abusing partner. The role of URE within a unilateral family therapy for alcohol abuse is demonstrated drawing on the experiences of 68 spouses of uncooperative alcohol abusers. Procedural guidelines & criteria for use, a case example, benefits and limitations, and other areas of possible application are discussed. 1 Table, 31 References.

Other Comments: This is an older study, but it uses unique population and non-voluntary spouses.

Parke, M. (2003). *Are married parents really better for children? What research says about the effects of family structure on child well being*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

- ✓ Summary of literature

Article Summary: This annotated brief summarizes research on the effects of family structure on child well being, identifying issues that remain to be explored. On average, children who grow up in families with both their biological parents in a low-conflict marriage are better off in several ways than children who grow up in single-, step-, or cohabiting-parent households. Compared to children raised by their married parents, children in other types of families are more likely to achieve lower educational levels, become teen parents, and experience health, behavior, and mental health problems. Also, children in single- and cohabiting-parent families are more likely to be poor. Nonetheless, most children not living with married, biological parents grow up without serious problems. In individual situations, marriage may or may not make children better off, depending on whether the marriage is "healthy" and stable. Marriage may be a proxy for other parental characteristics associated with relationship stability and positive child outcomes. The legal basis and public support involved in the institution of marriage helps create the best conditions for developing factors that children need most to thrive: consistent, stable, loving attention from two parents who cooperate and who have sufficient resources and support from two extended families, two sets of friends, and society. (Contains 52 endnotes.)

Mack, D. (2000). *Hungry Hearts: Evaluating the New Curricula for Teens on Marriage and Relationships. A Report to the Nation*. New York, NY: Institute for American Values.

- ✓ Program evaluation with author setting criteria by which to measure effectiveness
- ✓ Policy recommendations

Article Summary: This report evaluates ten marriage and relationship skills curricula that are representative of materials currently in use as part of school-based marriage education for junior high and high school students. The evaluation is based on five criteria: (1) the curriculum has a marriage focus; (2) it conveys to students that marriage is typically beneficial; (3) it is comprehensive; (4) it is age-appropriate; and (5) it recommends general habits of good characters and characteristics of personal development which can enhance marriageability. No marriage curriculum met all five criteria, although three contained a sustained marriage focus, affirmed the benefits of marriage, and came closer than the others in offering diverse types of knowledge about marriage in an age-appropriate fashion. Recommendations are included for educators, parents, and community leaders on the guidance students should receive for marriage preparation. Throughout the report are sidebars containing additional information. The report concludes with a list of additional curricula and 89 endnotes.

Waldo, M. & Harmon, M. J. (1999). Relationship enhancement groups with state hospital patients and staff. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, 24 (1), 27-36.

- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Discusses one form of group interpersonal-skill training, relationship-enhancement (RE) therapy, which was offered to patients and staff as a pilot program. Patients and staff found learning RE behaviors and skills to be beneficial to their communication and helpful in improving their relationships.

Stanley, S. M. (2001). Making a case for premarital education. *Family Relations*, 50 (3), 272-280.

- ✓ Research findings
- ✓ Policy

Article Summary: This article advances the argument that engaging in broadly applied premarital education efforts can reduce marital distress and divorce. Because of the complexity of design issues and difficulties inherent in outcome studies, researchers will reasonably continue to debate the effectiveness of premarital education regimens. Furthermore, there is a great deal more to be discovered that will guide prevention efforts in ways that will improve the effectiveness of those efforts in the future. Using a combination of rational argument and empirical findings, four key benefits of premarital education are discussed: (a) it can slow couples down to foster deliberation, (b) it sends a message that marriage matters, (c) it can help couples learn of options if they need help later, and (d) there is evidence that providing some couples with some types of premarital training, e.g., the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), can lower their risks for subsequent marital distress or termination. 86 References. Adapted from the source document.

Wampler, K.S. (1982). The effectiveness of the Minnesota couple communication program: A review of research. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 8 (3), 345-355.

- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This article reviews 19 research studies on the Minnesota Couple Communication Program (CCP), which indicates an immediate positive effect on communication behavior and relationship satisfaction. Found CCP does not alter reported levels of self-disclosure or self-esteem. Positive changes persisted in some studies, but evidence of the durability of effects is weak.

Other Comments: Old, but recent research is not being done.

DeMaria, Rita M. (1998). *A National Survey of Married Couples Who Participate in Marriage Enrichment: Satisfaction, Couple Type, Divorce Potential, Conflict Styles, Attachment Patterns, and Romantic and Sexual Satisfaction of Married Couples Who Participated in PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills), a Marriage Enrichment Program*. Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences, 59, 5, Nov, 1774-A.

- ✓ Survey findings

Comment: Could not get this article, but it seems to be one of the only research articles on PAIRS in the last 5-6 years.

Griffin, J. M. & Apostol, R. A. (1993). The influence of relationship enhancement training on differentiation of self. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 19, 3, 269-274.

- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Examined effectiveness of Relationship Enhancement program in increasing functional and basic levels of differentiation of self among 20 married couple participants. Data from pretest, posttest, and follow-up measures revealed significant increases in functional and basic levels of differentiation of self and in relationship quality and significant negative correlations between differentiation of self and anxiety.

Sullivan, K. T., & Anderson, C. (2002). Recruitment of engaged couples for premarital counseling: An empirical examination of the importance of program. *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 10 (4), 388-397.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Study seeks to understand what potential participants perceive are attractive characteristics in premarital prevention approaches. Results indicate that leader characteristics, content, and topics such as communication, finances, and problem solving are the most important elements of premarital counseling to couples. Differences based on gender and risk level are reported. (Contains 30 references, 3 tables, and an appendix.)

Stanley, S. M., Markman, H.J., Prado, L. M., Olmos-Gallo, P. A., Tonelli, L., St Peters, M., Leber, B. D., Bobulinski, M., Cordova, A., & Whitton, S.W. (2001). Community-based premarital prevention: Clergy and lay leaders on the front lines. *Family Relations*, 50 (1), 67-76.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Reports on the results of the dissemination of an empirically based, premarital education program within religious organizations. Results reveal that clergy and lay leaders were as effective in the short run as university staff. Couples reported that the communication skills components of premarital education were the most helpful. (Contains 48 references and 1 table.)

Durana, C. (1997). Enhancing marital intimacy through psychoeducation: The PAIRS program. *Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 5 (3), 204-215.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Explores intimacy enhancement through a psychoeducational method, the Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS) Program. Participants were more distressed and less intimate than general population. Clients' perceptions of intimacy and what maintains intimacy were measured. Findings suggest a multifaceted view of intimacy. Significant gains were sustained in follow-up period while gender differences had reduced. Intimacy appears to be a skill that can be learned.

Markman, H.J., et al. (1993). Preventing marital distress through communication and conflict management training: A 4- and 5-year follow-up. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 61 (1), 70-77.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: Examined four- and five-year follow-up data from evaluation of effects of Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, marital distress prevention program that teaches couples effective communication and conflict management skills. At five-year follow-up, intervention, as compared with control, couples had higher levels of positive and lower levels of negative communication skills and lower levels of marital violence.

Guerney, B. Jr., & Maxson, P. (1990). Marital and family enrichment research: a decade review and look ahead. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52 (4), 1127-1135.

✓ Literature review

Article Summary: Reviews several areas of marital and family enrichment: methodology and interpretation; subject characteristics and populations; format,

composition, process, and leadership; component effectiveness comparisons; and program effectiveness comparisons. For each area, briefly summarizes major research contributions of the 1980s and offers recommendations for research in the 1990s.

Other Comments: Old, but most of research was done in the 80's.

Ooms, T., Bouchet, S., & Parke, M. (2004). *Beyond Marriage Licenses: Efforts to Strengthen Marriage and Two- Parent Families*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

- ✓ Historical overview of the government involvement in “marriage” and “marriage policy”
- ✓ Inventory of Government related marriage activities in the States as of Fall, 2003
- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This article “seeks to provide an introductory map to the emerging landscape of couples and marriage policy.” The many different initiatives that exist to strengthen marriage across the country are organized into four categories: 1) State policy initiatives, commissions, and campaigns; 2) Changes in marriage and divorce laws; 3) Programs and services; and 4) Policy changes related to marriage in TANF and child support programs. State by State profiles highlight the marriage strengthening activities of each of the states.

Other Comments: Very useful for historical perspective and a very thorough snapshot of activities throughout the country and funding streams that support them.

Catholic Marriage Prep for Poor (NACFLM)

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? The Catholic Church in the United States now requires marriage preparation for all couples who want to be married in the Church. In addition, there has been a marriage enrichment movement in the American Catholic Church for over 40 years. Some of the programs have clients other than white, middle class. Therefore, the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers was contacted, and the organization's staff agreed to run a blurb in the monthly email to the NACFLM members, asking programs to contact us if they had programs designed for populations other than white, middle class couples. Five programs contacted us.

What did we learn? Both marriage preparation and marriage enrichment programs contacted us. The programs were designed for special populations, including marriage enrichment for developmentally challenged couples (Cincinnati); marriage enrichment for refugee families (Allentown, PA, with materials in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese); marriage preparation for Hispanic couples (PREP, translated); marriage enrichment for deaf couples and mentally challenged couples (Houston); lost cost marriage preparation and marriage enrichment, including Hispanic couples (Albuquerque); and low cost marriage preparation, including Hispanic couples (Rev. Ruhnke).

By and large, many of the marriage preparation programs were based on PREP. None of them have been evaluated. The marriage preparation programs were more frequent and better attended because of mandatory preparation requirements. Most of the programs offered follow-up sessions or weekends for persons who participated in the program.

Articles/programs to highlight/cite. It might be interesting to review the two programs for the developmentally challenged and mentally challenged to see if there are

materials that might be used in the curriculum. We have requested copies of the materials.

Programs Reviewed

Ralph Johnson, President, Board of Directors, The Marriage Enrichment Weekend Program, Inc., P.O. Box 94026, Albuquerque, NM 87199-4026, 505.884.8250, RalphRuth@worldnet.att.net, www.tmewpi.org.

✓ Program

Program Summary: The Marriage Enrichment Weekend Program, Inc., in Albuquerque, NM provides marriage preparation for engaged couples and marriage enrichment for married couples. These programs are usually presented in a parish and by a team from the church. Used by many lower income couples, the programs are designed to minimize expenses to the participating couples. The programs are available in English and Spanish. They have trained many Hispanic couples. Since the Catholic diocese requires marriage preparation prior to marriage, they have a built-in clientele. No evaluation has been done of the programs.

Nancy Butchee, Family Life Director, Catholic Diocese of Allentown, PA, 617.289.8900 x. 238.

✓ Program

Program Summary: Two programs: First, completing the second year of a grant on Refugee Healthy Marriage. This program is using the PREP materials on relationship enrichment, and now has the materials in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The program has not been very successful, because in Allentown, while there are a variety of different refugee groups (e.g., Bosnians Vietnamese, etc.), they come to Allentown in very small numbers, are sponsored by a church community and are absorbed into that community very quickly, and are struggling to survive financially and hence, aren't very interested in marriage preparation or enrichment. And second, the Family Life Office has also participated in another community program. Over the last two and one-half years, 600 Hispanics in Reading, PA have gone through PREP. This community program translated PREP into Spanish; evidently the translation was a good one, because PREP bought the translation from the program.

Peg Black, Director, Family Life Office, Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 100 East 8th Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202, 513.421.3131 x. 2225, pblack@catholiccincinnati.org.

✓ Program

Program Summary: The Cincinnati Archdiocese Family Life Director is currently working with the county Mental Retardation and Developmentally Delayed (MRDD) agency and some other agencies in putting together a day of reflection for developmentally challenged married couples. They are creating the materials from scratch. The program has not yet been piloted.

Winnie Honeywell, Family Life Director, Catholic Diocese of Galveston/Houston, 713.741.8709, winhoney@diogh.org.

✓ Program

Program Summary: The Family Life Director developed materials for marriage enrichment for deaf couples. The materials were developed to be used by clergy and by sponsoring couples to work with individual deaf couples or in groups for marriage enrichment. These materials have been used by a number of clergy, but no evaluation has been done. Later, these same materials were adapted to used for marriage enrichment for mentally challenged couples.

Rev. Rob Runke, The Sponsor Couple Program for Christian Marriage Preparation,
ruhne@flash.net, www.marriagepreparation.com.

✓ Program

Program Summary: Rev. Ruhnke is well known in family ministry in the Catholic community, has developed a program and materials, the Sponsor Couple Program for Christian Marriage Preparation. The materials are very inexpensive and are available in Spanish and some other languages. The program's process is very simple, and requires only a sponsoring couple-type setting. Older versions of the materials can still be purchased from Liguori Press, but Rev. Ruhnke has new, updated, and Spanish versions that he markets himself. He also has a Spanish speaking trainer who can be hired to come to dioceses or parishes where the Spanish version is needed.

Healthy Marriage and Fugitive Literature, Fragile Families, Low-Income Families, Marriage Education

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? Individual researchers were contacted and unpublished reports (or reports only available on Web sites) were reviewed from three large Federally funded studies related to Healthy Marriage—the Building Strong Families project (Mathematica Policy Research), the Supporting Healthy Marriages demonstration (MDRC/ABT), and the Urban Institute “Lewis and Clark” project. Contacts working on these projects were asked to point to any research or programs they knew of that would be relevant to the child welfare population. Results are summarized below. Several recent articles related to marriage in low-income families, both married and unmarried (fragile), were also reviewed. Nine documents/articles are reviewed and summarized in total.

What did we learn? Although there is very little published information available working on relationship/marriage issues with the child welfare population specifically, some of the current experience in adapting marriage education/relationship skills curricula for low-income populations could be very helpful in shaping a curriculum for child welfare staff training.

This information documents why there is a need to focus on couple/parental relationships as part of providing services. It also provides some interesting ideas of the types of healthy marriage programs/services that could be effectively offered to different types of child welfare clients ranging from biological parents at risk of child abuse and neglect, to foster and adoptive parents, to teen parents or teens in independent living situations.

What seems to be totally missing so far is any thoughtful discussion of what do public/private agency workers (child welfare, TANF, or others) need to know about couple relationships and marriage patterns, and how can/should they use it in the course of their work with clients? What is their role in strengthening marriage?

One goal could be to train child welfare staff to identify those families who could benefit from these healthy marriage/relationship programs and then refer them to them. However, no programs focused on training potential referral sources or gatekeepers (but this kind of training is being offered occasionally to frontline staff, pastors, and so forth in Oklahoma because PREP workshops are now widely available).

Relationships and marriage education services are not for the most part available in most communities in Colorado, Wyoming, and Kansas, especially not for low-income clients or clients of the child welfare system. So what is the goal of this curriculum? What are appropriate expectations for child welfare workers in this area? We will have to develop these for ourselves, perhaps in concert with the other Children’s Bureau Training projects.

Once we have clarified the goals and roles we can realistically expect child welfare workers to play, some of the material reviewed can provide some useful curriculum content. (As one example, perhaps all child welfare workers could learn about the importance of reaching out to the fathers, and effective ways to do so. And how to emphasize to both parents the importance to their child of their learning to get along and cooperate as long as they are also taught to recognize the danger signs for an unhealthy, abusive relationship—maybe this is already included in their training?)

Also some of the program/curriculum leaders identified in the reports reviewed could be very helpful in thinking how to integrate a focus on couples into the ongoing child-welfare training curricula, since many of them include a focus on the couple relationships as part of their overall assessment and services to the family as a whole, integrating parent education with couple education for example.

Articles/programs to highlight/cite. Reports were only reviewed that had some relevance to our project. A couple of briefs as possible “required reading” are identified in a curriculum since they were brief and readable (Mary Parke’s “What Are Fragile Families?” and David Fein’s “Married and Poor”).

Articles Reviewed

Dion, M.R., Devaney, B., McConnell, S., Ford, M., Hill, H., Winston, P (2002). *Helping Unwed Parents Build Strong and Healthy Marriages: A Conceptual Framework for Interventions*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research Inc. (available on line)

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Editorial commentary

Article Summary: This report summarizes findings of a study designed to develop a framework for intervening with “fragile families” around the time of the birth of their out-of-wedlock child. Fragile families are defined as economically and socially vulnerable. The study involved an expert panel, review of the literature, field work-site visits to around 20 diverse programs serving this population, and technical assistance.

Relevant findings: Three of the programs site visited were home visiting programs—intensive, long-term designed to prevent child abuse and neglect, and included the Nurse Family Partnership Program(NFPP). One of the conclusions was that these programs could be modified to include a relationship skills and marriage education components.

Other Comments: This is a very comprehensive and thoughtful study. Some of the information compiled about “fragile families” could be useful to include in a child welfare training program. In general, the framework is more useful to those designing relationships/marriage programs for vulnerable populations than for training child welfare workers.

The study occasionally refers to domestic violence and substance abuse as issues in these families but no explicit reference is made to child abuse or the child welfare

system, though presumably this population is at considerable risk of ending up in the child welfare system.

Hershey, A., Devaney, B., Dion, R.M., & McConnell, S. (2004). *Building Strong Families: Guidelines for Developing Programs*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Editorial commentary

Article Summary: This is the second major report from the Building Strong Families project, which is a multi-site, experimental (random assignment) test of three-year interventions with adult unwed couples starting around the time of their child's birth. Most of the couples will be low-income. Building on the first phase of this project, this report outlines the key service and policy components these programs will include: 1) Instructions in Skills Associated with Healthy Marriage; 2) Family Support Services; 3) Family Coordinators and Strategies for Reducing Marriage (policy) Disincentives.

The report includes a useful summary of the research on the context and circumstances of unmarried parents and the challenges they face. It describes in some detail the key program components and the curriculum content.

One module deals with managing how parenthood affects couple relationships and marriage. It states that research consistently finds that relationships and marital satisfaction typically decrease while conflict increases following childbirth. In turn, the quality of the parents' relationship affects child's well being and early childhood development.

The authors identified a few programs that help families work through issues related to the transition from couplehood to parenthood (e.g., learning techniques for helping their child sleep and thus gain respite for themselves) to renegotiating who will be responsible for specific household tasks.

As in their earlier report, this report states that Child Abuse Prevention Programs (like Healthy Families, Nurse Home visiting Programs, and Family Resource Centers) could be useful BSF program delivery settings. "Because children are at higher risk for abuse by non-biological fathers, providing additional support and education to help romantically-involved biological parents stay together is a natural extension of existing services."

Other Comments: This project provides the rationale for focusing on the biological parents relationship around the time of birth of their child, and highlights some of the difficulties and challenges of doing so. There may be some useful content in this report for training child welfare workers who work with young parents "at risk," even if they work in a non-intensive public program setting.

One major gap in this report is that although they discuss many of the challenges of recruitment and the importance of conducting "outreach" activities, they do not discuss the importance of training referral sources to identify couples who could benefit from these programs and how to refer them. As has been discovered in Oklahoma, potential referral sources may be highly skeptical initially of the value of or need for these programs and/or feel quite incompetent about how to have conversations with clients that would lead to effective referrals.

Dion, M.R. & Strong, D. (2004). *Implementing Programs to Strengthen Unwed Parents' Relationships: Lessons from Family Connections in Alabama*. Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

- ✓ Program evaluation

Article Summary: This report summarizes the findings of an implementation study of the Family Connections in Alabama (FCA) program. FCA was a 12-month project conducted in 2003 that aimed to design, implement, and evaluate a program to provide family life education to low-income unmarried parents of young children. The FCA was selected for study because it is one of the very few programs that include a focus on couple relationships among low-income unmarried parents. The report describes some lessons learned that could inform the development and operation of the planned multi-site Building Strong Families demonstration. The program consisted of a family life education curriculum delivered in classroom settings to diverse low-income populations in four areas of the State. Case management services, including home visits, were also provided in part to screen for violent and abusive situations and make appropriate referrals.

Selected lessons that would appear to have some relevance to our project are:

- ◆ Staff and participants valued the mutual learning and support that came from the group sessions (compared to individual visits).
- ◆ Recruitment of fathers remains a challenge. The majority of participants were individual mothers. Although 86 percent of enrollees reported being in some kind of relationship, less than one-third attended the sessions as a couple. Thirty-two percent reported being married at time of recruitment.
- ◆ Staff found that emphasizing benefits to children was an important theme in program recruitment. Attendance greatly improved when incentives such as on-site child care, meals, transportation, and small monetary incentives were provided.
- ◆ A few potential instances of mental illness, substance abuse, and child or partner abuse also surfaced, but less often and in different ways than might have been anticipated.
- ◆ Both professional and paraprofessional staff received training to deliver the curriculum. Their initial skepticism about the focus on fathers and the parents' relationship faded when they saw how the participants responded so favorably to these discussions.

Other Comments: Again the lessons from this study apply to service delivery programs rather than training of public agency staff. However, the following conclusion underscores the importance of investing in staff training: "Organizations planning to implement BSF programs may need to build in significant upfront training and opportunities for staff to process and develop the understanding that viable relationships among unwed parents often exist, have the potential to be strengthened, and that healthy marriage is desired by and may be possible for many of them."

Ehrle, J., Stagner, M., Reardon-Anderson (forthcoming). *Moving Forward with Supports for Healthy Marriages: Issues to Consider in Implementing Marriage Programs*. Submitted to Administration for Children and Families, August, 2004; and

Ehrle, J., Murray, J., & Stagner, M., (forthcoming) *Investigation of Programs to Strengthen and Support Healthy Marriages*. Report submitted to ACF, August, 2004.

Note: Since these two publications, the products of an ongoing Urban Institute ACF funded project, are not yet published, we talked to the authors about our interest and they shared some notes about findings they thought might be relevant to this project.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Systemic lit review and program investigations

Article Summary: This project, colloquially known as the "Lewis and Clark" project, is a wide ranging exploratory study to examine approaches to strengthen and promote

healthy marriage, with special focus on needs of low-income families. It has two components. First, conducting a Systemic Review of the pertinent research and program literature, and second, telephone interviews and site visits to a wide range of programs and settings offering services to promote and support healthy families, in which couple and marriage relationships are a focus, or could potentially be a focus of the service delivery. Two national expert panels were used to guide these activities.

Relevant points made in conversation and selected program notes include:

- ◆ Family structure data for the child welfare populations is scarce. One local program tried to write a grant and found it impossible to attain data on the number of children in the child welfare system from single parent families. They believed the State DSS collected this data but did not want to provide it. Published data from AFARS also does not offer much on family structure.
- ◆ In general, several program operators pointed out that in fact it is hard to separate out family issues related to the couple, the marriage, and the parenting as they are all interconnected. Many of the core relationships skills needed are transferable. Yet most programs address one or other family dimension and not the relationships as a whole. Many child welfare agencies focus on parenting and neglect the parental relationships. Some relationships and marriage programs focus on the couple relationships and avoid parenting issues.

Program operators interviewed suggested several possible child welfare target populations for “healthy marriage” services:

- ◆ When working with DSS on a reunification plan for the child, often the biological parents’ relationships will be an issue. These parents need to learn good relationships skills to help them stabilize their relationships with a partner/spouse/parent, or to avoid choosing an abusive partner/spouse, etc.
- ◆ Teenagers living in group homes need classes where they learn about dating, relationships choices, relationships skills, and the benefits and responsibilities of marriage and raising children within a healthy marriage.
- ◆ Teen mothers in foster care. One program in Florida does not presently focus on the young mothers relationship with the baby’s father or with men in general but they see a great need for this. Many of the clients have issues with men and relationships. And about 50% of the fathers want to be involved in the baby’s life and would be willing to come to group classes. The teen mother’s parents are also often involved and might want to come to classes.
- ◆ Several pointed out that adoption and fostering can place considerable stress on the parents’ relationship.
- ◆ Families in which one parent is incarcerated (which is the case for large numbers of children in the child welfare system) need help in learning how to sustain and nurture their relationships with partner, spouse, or extended family. Studies suggest that investment in educational programs to strengthen these relationships should help prevent recidivism.

Many of the programs the Urban Institute team visited served families at risk of child abuse and neglect, and some had clients who were referred by the child welfare system. Several programs visited, especially those serving the Latino community, provided services in a “family-centered or family systems” framework, and thus did find themselves dealing with relationship and marriage issues and teaching marriage and relationship skills is a part of their work. However, these issues were dealt with on a casework, counseling basis and not as part of a preventive educational program.

Programs were more likely to offer parenting classes than relationship or marriage classes. This seemed to be partly due to the lack of a funding stream to support

relationships/marriage programming. A couple of programs did offer marriage preparation and enrichment classes.

Other Comments: These initial comments from this project again provide useful ideas for target populations within the child welfare system. For the this program, the main value is to underscore the need for child welfare workers to become more aware of and knowledgeable about their client’s relationships and how they affect the child.

Stanley, S.M., Markman, H.J., & Jenkins, N.H (2004). *Marriage Education Using PREP with Low Income Clients: Guidelines and Recommendations from PREP, Inc.*, www.PREPinc.com.

✓ Guidance document

Article Summary: This 80-page document was prepared by PREP founders primarily for those who have been trained to deliver the PREP curriculum and who are interested in serving low-income populations. It is based on what has been learned primarily from offering PREP to diverse populations in Oklahoma as part of the statewide Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. It is a “living document” and will be periodically revised.

The report discusses the diversity of low-income clients. Some are highly dependent on public support and others are the working poor and develop a relationship typology of five different groups and discusses how all or parts of the PREP program and curriculum can best be offered to, or adapted for, these different groups: 1) Lower Income committed couples either married, remarried, or engaged to be married; 2) “Maybe We Will” couples who are romantically involved and for whom marriage is a possibility; 3) Couples in a romantic or non-romantic relationship with no marriage intention; 4) Single adults, often single parents with no current partner; and 5) High school and young adults.

The report identifies:

- ◆ Core relationship dynamics applicable to all groups, including key concepts of safety—safety in interaction, personal safety (physical and emotional), and safety in commitment.
- ◆ Key characteristics of low-income populations that marriage educators need to be aware of and take into account in any program or curriculum adaptations.
- ◆ Specific program and curriculum challenges, e.g., low literacy levels, presence of children often from multiple partners, financial pressures, recruitment challenges, need for more interactive and less didactic learning formats, greater intensity of “dose” and need for follow up services, and need to build linkages to wrap around services needed to respond to other problems that affect relationships (domestic violence, substance abuse, unemployment, incarceration, and so forth).

Finally the report reviews the content of the PREP curriculum (modules and concepts) discussing their relevance to the different groups, and modifications and additions that can be made both in content and in format.

Other Comments: Although this report addresses a specific (and widely used) marriage and relationships skills curriculum, there are many ideas about the characteristics of relationships in low-income populations and the challenges service providers need to take into account that may be useful to our curriculum development stage.

The PREP founders probably have the most experience to date of any marriage educators with offering relationship and marriage education to low-income families both in the civilian and the military sector. While they have no specific experiences working with child welfare populations, they have spent time thinking about how to

adapt PREP for home-visiting programs for families at risk. In Oklahoma, they are currently providing PREP workshops to adoptive parents (see the next article).

Oklahoma Marriage Services for Adoptive Parents—a demonstration program. For further info contact Tony Russell, Public Strategies Inc. tony@publicstrategies.com

No article: Information provided below draws upon proposals, program reports reviewed in my capacity as a consultant to the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative.

✓ Demonstration program design and implementation

Article Summary: Oklahoma has had high success in placing increased numbers of children in permanent homes and has received an HHS bonus. Since 1999, about 1,000 couples adopt children each year, an increase of at least 50 percent in the number of finalized adoptions. These couples are adopting at-risk children from foster homes.

In October 2003, the Children and Family Services Division received a 3-year grant from the Children’s Bureau to operate a project to provide marriage education services to Oklahoma adoptive parents. The project is a collaboration with the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, managed by Public Strategies Inc. This project builds on a former program, funded by the Casey Family Program providing post legal adoption services to adoptive parents.

The new services include weekend marriage retreats where adoptive couples participate in the PREP relationship workshop, and are offered the ENRICH relationship inventory to help couples identify the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship. In addition, respite services such as child care are also offered through a voucher program.

The rationale for this project is based on Oklahoma data that shows high rates of divorce for adoptive couples and research showing that fostering and adopting special needs children places considerable stress on the couple, which can either threaten the stability of the placement or the marriage. Data from the completed ENRICH inventories administered at the first two retreats revealed that 61 percent had highly distressed marriages.

Early implementation lessons from the first year of operation showed that adoptive couples want these marriage education services and recruitment was easy. They also clearly need these services. Participants reported that they benefited from time away as a couple and from interaction with other adoptive parents.

Scott Stanley and Howard Markman are currently applying for an NIMH grant to conduct a longitudinal, random assignment study of adoptive couples in Oklahoma with two treatment groups participating in the marriage education and enhanced marriage education services.

Other Comments: This project is an example of the relevance of marriage education services to adoptive couples. Our project needs to keep abreast of its future progress and any research findings.

Parke, M. (2004, January). Who are “fragile families” and what do we know about them? *Couples and Marriage Brief*, 4, Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This policy brief summarizes key selected findings from two studies—the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study (FFCWB), the first national (20 city)

study of unmarried parents, their relations to each other, and the well-being of their children; and the Time, Love, Cash, Caring and Children Study (TLC3), a related ethnographic study of a sub-sample of romantically involved couples from the FFCWB.

This study dispels many preconceptions about out-of-wedlock children and their so-called “single mothers”. The key findings of this rich body of research are to document that the large majority of children born out of wedlock have two parents, who at the time of their birth are romantically involved with each other, and many intend to marry. Since these “fragile families” are in fact at high risk of breaking up, the study highlights the need for supports and intervention around the time of birth of the child.

The study explores the nature of the relationship and economic difficulties and circumstances that leads to the fragility of these relationships. It concludes that about of third of these unmarried parents could benefit from participation in relationships/marriage education programs, another third would benefit if they were also offered addition “hard” services, and around a third would not benefit at all from relationships/marriage education.

This study is producing a large quantity of research papers. Since data will eventually be collected on child well-being, there should be some information coming available about the extent of child abuse and neglect in “fragile families.”

The study findings have attracted a great deal of attention from policymakers. It has also directly led to the development and funding of the Building Strong Families multi-site, demonstration project conducted by Mathematica Policy Research Inc.

Other Comments: There are many sources of information summarizing this growing body of research but this brief, at only six pages, is very accessible and perhaps should be required reading for all participants in the HMFF child welfare training. (Four of the key researchers reviewed and “approved” of the brief).

Again the relevance of this research to child welfare staff is that it provides invaluable information about the relationships between unwed mothers and fathers, who surely constitute a large bulk of the child welfare population. Importantly, the findings emphasize the need for “early intervention” with these parents. By the time the children come to the attention of the child welfare system, the parents’ relationships have often deteriorated and may be beyond repair.

Fein, D. J. (2004, August). *Married and Poor: Basic Characteristics of Economically Disadvantaged Couples in the U.S.* New York: MDRC.
www.mdrc.org/publications/393/workpaper.html.

- ✓ Research study findings
- ✓ Wide ranging data and literature review

Article Summary: This 10-page article (with many figures), prepared by David Fein of Abt Associates, represents the first effort to synthesize what is known about marriage in low-income populations. He draws principally on economic, demographic, and sociological research.

The key findings, some of which might be surprising, are:

- ◆ People with economic disadvantages are just as likely to marry as other people, but their marriages are substantially more unstable.
- ◆ Where the vast bulk of first transition to parenthood among upper middle class couples follow first marriages, first births among disadvantaged newly weds are far more likely to precede marriage.

- ◆ Disadvantaged married couples are comparatively young and disproportionately Latino. African Americans constitute a relatively small share of this population.
- ◆ Millions of married couples use a wide variety of government assistance programs (e.g., food stamps, housing subsidies, and Medicaid, and nearly one half of families receiving Medicaid are married).
- ◆ It is dangerous to attribute to disadvantaged couples overall results observed for particular race-ethnic groups. For example, African Americans are less likely than non-African Americans at all economic levels to marry, but poor people are just as likely as other people to marry.

Other Comments: This working paper was prepared as a part of the initial planning for the Supporting Healthy Marriages demonstration program being conducted by MDRC and Abt Associates and others. (SHM is a planned, Federally funded multi-site demonstration program using random assignment focusing on interventions for committed, mostly low- income couples.)

The paper provides very useful data on a neglected subject—marriage among disadvantaged populations, and is therefore an essential complement to the research and discussions about unmarried, “fragile” families. It suggests that though single parent/fragile families may constitute the majority of families served by public social service/child welfare programs, many needy families are married, though their marriages are not very stable. Again this suggests that efforts to strengthen and stabilize these marriages may be a very helpful intervention.

Ooms, T,& Wilson, P. (2004). The Challenges of Offering Relationship and Marriage Education to Low-Income Populations. *Family Relations*, 53, 440-447.

✓ Research and program review

Article Summary: Relationship and marriage education has been primarily developed for and offered to middle-class committed couples. Increasing government funding of these programs raises questions about the extent to which these curricula and programs need to be adapted for low-income populations.

This article reviews the limited body of research available to identify some of the challenges in adapting these programs for more economically diverse populations. We describe three examples of marriage education programs that have had some experience serving low-income couples: marriage education in the Catholic Church; the Survival Skills for Healthy Families program, a 24-year-old program based in East San Jose, California serving ethnically diverse low-income populations (George Doub and Virginia Scott), and PREP, also 24-years-old, which has had experience serving low-income military couples and diverse couples in Oklahoma since 2001.

The article outlines some of the new government funded initiatives emerging to provide marriage and relationships education to low-income families and discusses two very different examples, one in Michigan (the Michigan Enhancing Family Formation Project) and the Louisiana Healthy Marriage and Strengthening Families Initiative.

The last section outlines the principal challenges involved in designing effective relationships and marriage education programs for low-income families and promising ideas for responding to them. These challenges include identifying realistic program goals, selecting the target audience, recruiting participants, selecting program facilitators, and designing the program content, format, duration, follow-up and related services.

Other Comments: This should be a useful article for anyone interested in promoting healthy marriage among low-income populations but also skeptical about whether and how this can best be approached through educational programs. It shows that some people are already doing it and learning a good deal along the way. It might not be directly useful for child welfare staff who will not be delivering marriage education/relationship services themselves.

Substance Abuse

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? Three articles that discussed the use of many of the same components of relationship enhancement and marriage education curricula for use with substance abusing individuals and couples. There are also some references to how this could be applied to work with substance abusing couples where there is also domestic violence. The same authors, William Fals-Stewart, Gary Birchler and Timothy O'Farrell, wrote much of the work reviewed.

What did we learn? This information will be useful when bringing substance abuse providers on board. May also be helpful with domestic violence providers.

Articles Reviewed

Fals-Stewart, W., Birchler, G., & O'Farrell, T.J. (2003). Alcohol and other substance abuse. In Snyder, D.K. & Whisman, M.A. (eds.) *Treating difficult couples: helping clients with coexisting mental and relationship disorders* (pp 159-179). Guilford Press.

✓ Program Description

Article Summary: A description of behavioral couple therapy and its application to substance abuse treatment. To provide an integrated conceptualization of substance use problems and dyadic relationships grounded in the empirical literature that has evolved over the last 30 years.

O'Farrell, T.J. & Fals-Stewart, W. (2000). Behavioral couples therapy for alcoholism and drug abuse. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 18, 51-54.

✓ Research Study Findings

✓ Solutions

Article Summary: Behavioral couples therapy (BCT) sees the substance-abusing patient with the spouse to arrange a daily "sobriety contract." BCT also teaches communication and increases positive activities. Research supports three conclusions. First, BCT for both alcoholism and drug abuse produces more abstinence and fewer substance-related problems, happier relationships, fewer couple separations, and lower risk of divorce than does individual-based treatment. Second, domestic violence is substantially reduced after BCT for both alcoholism and drug abuse. Third, cost outcomes after BCT are very favorable for both alcoholism and drug abuse and are superior to individual-based treatment for drug abuse. BCT has strong research support

Other Comments: This article was helpful in regards to both substance abuse and domestic violence. BCT has components similar to some of the other marriage education programs such as communication skills and conflict resolution skills.

Fals-Stewart, W., Birchler, G. & Ellis, L. (1999). Procedures for evaluating the dyadic adjustment of drug-abusing patients and their intimate partners. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 16 (1), 5-16.

Article Summary: This article describes a basic multi-method relationship assessment procedure used by the authors in their recent investigations to evaluate the relationship adjustment of married or cohabiting drug-abusing patients and their intimate partners. The essential features of the relationship assessment procedure (i.e., brevity, breadth, depth, and use of psychometrically sound measures) would allow this method to be used routinely in non-research settings that treat substance-abusing patients.

Other Comments: While this article was a bit in-depth regarding the assessment, it discusses using the assessment to then provide relationship treatment for drug-abusing patients.

Domestic Violence

Literature Subset Summary

What was reviewed? Ten articles, most of which pertain to domestic violence and child welfare. Most of these are more focused on the “systems” response to domestic violence and the need for collaborative efforts between different agencies that deal with domestic violence.

What did we learn? Most of the literature deals with legal responses to keeping mothers and children safe from the batterers. There are, however, a number of programs that include in their programs parenting components as well as relationship enhancement components. It does not appear that there is much, if any, research on these programs though, given that they are relatively new.

Articles/programs to highlight/cite. The two papers that would be most helpful to us are “Parenting in the Context of Domestic Violence” and “Evaluating the Effectiveness of Coordinated Family Services in Idaho.” Both provide information on programs that are currently being used in domestic violence cases that keep males involved in parenting. Although these programs may not have much research behind them, it would be worth contacting them to get more information. They may be useful in developing curriculum for community partners in the area of domestic violence. Specific programs include:

- ✓ Men’s Parenting Program of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation’s Community Assistance Program in St. Paul, Minnesota
- ✓ EVOLVE Program in Connecticut
- ✓ For Our Children: Helping Parent Help Their Kids
- ✓ Nonviolent Family Skills Program in San Francisco
- ✓ Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center and Service League of San Mateo
- ✓ MOVE in San Francisco
- ✓ Center for Child Protection at Children’s Hospital in San Diego
- ✓ Parent n and Effective Co-Parenting Sessions implemented in Idaho

Articles Reviewed

Spears, L. (2000). Building Bridges Between Domestic Violence Organizations and Child Protective Services. *Violence Against Women Online Resources*.

- ✓ Editorial Commentary
- ✓ Policy Recommendations

Article Summary: Discusses how the child protection system works, the effect of domestic violence on children, and how child welfare agencies and domestic violence organizations should collaborate. Offers examples of programs where collaboration exists and gives suggestions for collaboration.

Other Comments: No information on working with and engaging fathers.

Pence, E. & Taylor, T. (2003, May). *Building safety for battered women and their children: A summary of three consultations*. Praxis International.

- ✓ Audits of child welfare cases in Greenbook sites
- ✓ Program review
- ✓ Recommendations
- ✓ Direction for future work

Article Summary: This paper provides information on the results of three consultations with communities exploring new interventions on behalf of battered women and their children. The sites were interested in the possibility of using the Safety and Accountability Audit as a planning tool to analyze and change current practice.

Other Comments: This paper mostly deals with coordinating responses between law enforcement, domestic violence, child welfare, and the courts. It does not provide any information on programs or strategies that may be useful in engaging males in parenting.

Lawrence, S. (2002). *Domestic violence and welfare policy, research findings that can inform policies on marriage and child well-being*. National Center for Children in Poverty.

- ✓ Research study findings

Article Summary: This report examines what is known from past research on domestic violence that may inform policies related to marriage and child well being. In addition, it highlights areas for future research and strategies that can advance stable marriages and improve the well being of children who otherwise might suffer the effects of domestic violence. This report examines research on the prevalence and correlation of domestic violence among women on welfare, the effects of domestic violence on child well-being, and marriage and domestic violence.

Other Comments: Not overly helpful. Nothing about working with fathers when there is domestic violence.

Carter, L. S. (2003, September). *Family Team Conferences in Domestic Violence Cases*. Family Violence Prevention Fund.

- ✓ Guidelines

Article Summary: This article provides information on using family team conferences in cases where domestic violence has occurred. Provides specific guidelines to be used in these cases.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Coordinated Family Services in Idaho, Report to Governor Kempthorne and the first regular session of the 57th Idaho Legislature, Idaho Supreme Court, January 6, 2003.

- ✓ Policy evaluation

Article Summary: This report discusses implementation of Idaho Code Section 32-1401 passed in 2001, which established a coordinated approach to court cases involving families and children in Idaho. It includes the number of surveys used, and a list of innovative programs and services available to families experiencing multiple problems such as child protection, domestic violence, and substance abuse.

Child Welfare Practices for Cases with Domestic Violence, Oregon Department of Human Services through a grant from The Office on Violence Against Women, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

- ✓ Policy/Protocol

Article Summary: Outlines guidelines for child welfare cases in Oregon where there is domestic violence.

Other Comments: Does not discuss anything about engaging fathers in the process.

Edleson, J., Mbilinyi, L., & Shetty, S. (2003). *Parenting in the Context of Domestic Violence*. Judicial Council of California.

- ✓ Information from interviews
- ✓ Program Information
- ✓ Direction for future work

Article Summary: This paper describes children's exposure to domestic violence, the needs of both parents and children in the context of domestic violence events, and the resources available to help them.

Other Comments: This paper provides good information on programs mostly in California that incorporate parenting information, responsible fatherhood, and relationship building in their programs. More information on these programs may be helpful in developing curriculum and training community partners in domestic violence.

Roulet, M., (2003). *Technical Assistance Series-Fatherhood Programs and Domestic Violence*. Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy.

Article Summary: This article provides information from meeting with representatives from over 20 representatives from domestic violence programs, batterer programs and fatherhood programs. Meetings were held in Madison Wisconsin. Participants raised concerns, discussed divergent frames of reference and began a conversation about domestic violence in poor communities and their potential role in helping reduce violence.

Frederick, L., & Lizdas, K. (2003). *The Role of Restorative Justice in the Battered Women's Movement*. Battered Women's Justice Project.

- ✓ Editorial commentary
- ✓ Policy recommendations
- ✓ Program Comparison

Article Summary: This article discusses practices in restorative justice and the battered women's movement, as well as principles common to both. Provides a proposal of how the two movements could work together to be more effective.

Other Comments: Not much information on fathers and working with children.

Attachment 1: Family Structure in Child Welfare: Principal Caregivers, Foster Families¹, and Adoptive Families.

2001 AFCARS Data—Composite of All States and Colorado, Kansas, and Wyoming

PRINCIPAL CAREGIVER FAMILY STRUCTURE

LOCALE	NOT APPLICABLE	MARRIED COUPLES	UNMARRIED COUPLES	SINGLE FEMALE	SINGLE MALE	NO DATA	TOTAL
National		117,621	67,831	311,426	28,943	171,390	697,211
Colorado		3,200	1,483	5,315	703	1,617	12,318
Kansas		3,114	0	4,193	553	0	7,860
Wyoming							

FOSTER FAMILY STRUCTURE

LOCALE	NOT APPLICABLE ²	MARRIED COUPLES	UNMARRIED COUPLES	SINGLE FEMALE	SINGLE MALE	NO DATA	TOTAL
National	213,639	307,588	10,166	180,441	21,489	171,316	804,639
Colorado	4,527	4,138	87	3,086	152	338	12,338
Kansas	0	2,912	0	939	99	4,260	8,210
Wyoming	799	646	10	157	21	21	1,654

ADOPTIVE FAMILY STRUCTURE

LOCALE	NOT APPLICABLE	MARRIED COUPLES	UNMARRIED COUPLES	SINGLE FEMALE	SINGLE MALE	NO DATA	TOTAL
National	4,657	30,874	637	13,739	1,033	0	50,940
Colorado	15	452	9	118	16	0	610
Kansas	32	329	0	66	1	0	428
Wyoming	0	39	0	5	2	0	46

¹ I did not do a separate AFCARS run on the structure of kinship care families. The National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare informs me that while there is a data element in AFCARS for this information, it is not reliable. AFCARS does differentiate between relative and non-relative care, but this data element has two problems: it is not used reliably across all states, and also, if there is no payment made to kinship care families by the child welfare agency (i.e., informal care), those families are often not “counted” by states.

² Children in group care, institutional care.