The State of the Union: When States Invest in Family Formation

Presented by: Connie Williams
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
The Commitment

Marriage
Importance of Marriage to Texans
2008 Baseline Report of Marriage and Divorce in the Lone Star state

- 90% of survey respondents report that “having a healthy, happy marriage is one of the most important things in life”
- 89% of those surveyed agree that “marriage is a lifelong commitment that should only be broken under extreme circumstances.
- Texans are willing to participate in marital or relationship education.
2004 Texas Marriage Facts

- 178,511 Marriages
- 81,324 Divorces affecting 62,380 children
Of the total Texas population of married people, fewer African Americans were married than their White and Hispanic counterparts.

64% of all mothers reported being married.
At birth, Texas African American babies are expected to live at least 5 fewer years than their White and Hispanic counterparts.
African Americans in Texas have the highest percentage of low birth rate babies.
African Americans in Texas have the highest percentage of infant mortalities.
The Call

Texas

Healthy Marriage Legislation
Approved spending $15 million in federal TANF funds for Healthy Marriage programs to promote healthy relationships, child well-being and reduce the risk of domestic violence.

Recipients of the funds, administered via grants, are to provide these services at no cost to participants.

HHSC is to establish a process for evaluating the best practices and outcomes of these programs.

HB 2683 became effective September 1, 2007.
HB 2685

Approved spending $15 million in federal TANF funds for Healthy Marriage programs to promote healthy relationships, child well-being and reduce the risk of domestic violence.

Allows a couple who attends an eight hour, HHSC qualifying premarital education course to forgo the 72-hour waiting period after applying for a marriage license and eliminates the $60.00 marriage license fee. The course completion certificate is good for one year from the marriage license application date.

HHSC received an additional $1 million in TANF funds to maintain a website to register trained marriage educators, make information available to the public, and verify that premarital education courses meet applicable standards.

HB 2685 becomes effective statewide September 1, 2008.
Along with existing efforts to strengthen families and improve outcomes, the expansion established through HB 2683 and HB 2685 is collectively known as the “Twogether in Texas” Program.
The Response
Texas Healthy Marriage Programs
Texas Healthy Marriage Programs
FY 2008

AVANCE – Houston

Building Strong and Healthy Families in Texas (BSHFT)

Community-Based Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI)

Healthy Marriage Development Program (HMDP)

Post-Adoptive Couple Retreats

Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM)

Regional Intermediaries

Web Registry of Marriage Education Providers
The Community
Texas
Healthy Marriage Partners
HHSC Healthy Marriage Support Activities: The Partners

- **HHSC Healthy Marriage Programs**

  - **Post-Adoptive Couples Retreats**
    - Partners:
      - Lutheran Social Services
      - University of Texas

  - **Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives**
    - Partners:
      - Nueces County Community Action Agency
      - Family Services of Greater Houston
      - The Parenting Center of Tarrant County

  - **Texas RAG (Marriage Survey)**
    - Partner:
      - University of Texas, School of Social Work

  - **Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM)**
    - Partners:
      - Child, Inc. (Austin)
      - Family Service Association of San Antonio
      - El Paso Center for Children

  - **Building Strong Families (BSF)**
    - Partners:
      - Office of the Attorney General
      - Healthy Families Houston
      - Healthy Families San Angelo

  - **AVANCE / HHSC Grant**
    - Partners:
      - AVANCE Houston
      - Head Start Laredo
      - Head Start Fort Bend
      - Head Start Fort Worth
      - Head Start Corpus Christi

  - **Healthy Marriage Development**
Texas Healthy Marriage
Client Service Benefits

- Relationship and Premarital Education Skills Classes
- Social events and date nights
- Weekend retreats and mentoring for Couples
- Community education and training
- Booster sessions to teach parenting and life skills
- Referrals to existing community services
- Research studies to guide future program and policy development
- Reduction of “marriage penalties” in benefit programs
- Technical assistance with developing a local domestic violence protocol
- Services to eliminate barriers to participation (e.g. transportation and childcare)
Texas Healthy Marriage Program
Web Registry of Marriage Education Providers

Pursuant to HB 2685, HHSC must maintain a website to register trained marriage educators, make information available to the public, and verify that premarital education courses meet applicable standards.
In 2007, the Texas Legislature passed House Bills (HBs) 2003 and 2005, which provided the funding and direction to develop a Healthy Marriage Program (HMP) in Texas. The program is dedicated to increasing the well-being of Texas children statewide by providing marriage and relationship education. HMP is accomplishing this through a partnership of public, private, community, and faith-based organizations and leaders who work together to build awareness, provide relationship training and support, and participate in research to improve existing programs and policies.
HHSC divided Texas into 12 geographic regions and contracted with one organization in each Region to serve as the Regional Intermediary (RI)

- Each RI selects vendors to provide premarital education classes
- Each RI recruits existing premarital education providers to join the volunteer network and offer their services to couples in their Region
Twogether in Texas RI Regions
Twogether in Texas RI Regions

3W: Cooke, Grayson, Wise, Denton, Palo Pinto, Parker, Tarrant, Johnson, Hood, Erath, and Somervell
3E: Fannin, Collin, Rockwall, Hunt, Kaufman, Dallas, Ellis, and Navarro
“Twogether in Texas” Providers
HHSC - funded

These state-funded providers:

• Must use secular curriculum
• Must use curriculum selected by RI
• Must offer classes free of charge
• Will be listed on the HHSC “Twogether in Texas” Web Portal by September 1, 2008

RIs will be offering contracts to qualified vendors through a competitive bid process to fulfill these requirements
These non-funded providers:

- Can use faith-based curriculum
- Must register their organization & curriculum with the Rl
- May charge a fee to those attending
- May be pastors, clergy, community organizations, counselors, or anyone certified in a recognized premarital curriculum
- Will also be listed on the HHSC Web Portal for “Twogether in Texas” by September 1, 2008
The Support
Texas Healthy Marriage Providers
Texas Healthy Marriage Support: Providers

Technical Assistance Provider – Public Strategies, Inc. (PSI)
Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV)
Texas Research Advisory Group (RAG)
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing (SMAM)
Outreach Materials
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Healthy Marriage Creative

Flyer

TWOGETHER IN TEXAS
LAUNCH AND LEARN

Location Placeholder
July 15, 2008 5:30 to 7:30 pm
200 South Congress Avenue

We are seeking faith and community-based pastoral educators to co-sponsor a new initiative, “TWOGETHER in Texas”, to provide pastoral education resources to faith communities.

Come find out how your organization can become a part of the TWOGETHER in Texas program at our next Launch and Learn event.

The conversation will focus on:
- The new pastoral legislation effective September 1, 2008
- Reduced postage/macabre fees and waiting periods for couples completing the courses
- Planning and implementation

Organization Name Placeholder
200 South Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78704
512 478-4397 www.webaddem.org
RSVP to Laurn Thompson by July 1, 2008

TWOGETHER IN TEXAS Learn to love for life.
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Healthy Marriage Creative

Direct Mail

LEARN TO LOVE FOR LIFE
APRENDAN A AMARSE
PARA TODA LA VIDA
LEARN TO LOVE FOR LIFE
FREE MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIP WORKSHOPS
SIGN UP NOW

LEARNING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN EVERY RELATIONSHIP, LIKE HOW TO:
- Talk with each other
- Solve problems
- Set goals for the future
- Enjoy being together
- Have fun!

Join when for a series of four, free workshops held at Head Start centers in your community. Instructor-led discussions will provide everyday skills you can use every day to make your love last for a lifetime.

WHAT OTHER COUPLES SAY ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:
- "My husband actually listens to me now... instead of just muting me out." — Angela, 35, Dallas
- "My daughter and son-in-law are almost acting like newlyweds again... and they have married nearly ten years." — Maria, 45, Fort Worth
- "I refused to go at first. But when she said other couples like us would be there. Once I went, I was surprised how it made things better. We have noticed the difference, too." — John, 30, Cypress
- "We learned how to work out our differences... solely without fighting." — Rebecca, 22, Fort Worth
- "She seems to understand me better... it's more positive with us. We're getting along like when we first started dating." — Jim, 26, Dallas

LEARN THE SKILLS FOR A LOVING, LASTING RELATIONSHIP
Some of the topics covered in the workshops are:
- What is a healthy marriage?
- Effective communication
- Fun and friendship
- Managing stress
- Supporting each other
- Clarity will be provided.

SPREAD THE LOVE:
If you know someone who would benefit from attending these free, informative workshops, please pass this brochure along or post it in your community.

Texas Health and Human Services Commission
Family and Community Services
Healthy Marriage Program
(512) 206-0983

Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Healthy Marriage Creative

Brochure
LEARN TO LOVE FOR LIFE

FREE MARRIAGE SKILLS WORKSHOPS IN YOUR AREA

CALL 211
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Healthy Marriage Creative

Radio Spots
   English and Spanish

TV Spots
   English and Spanish

Promotional Video
   English and Spanish
References


Kids Count National Data and The Texas Kids Count Project, Center for Public Policy Priorities, Austin, TX; Texas Department of State Health Services Vital Statistics Unit. Austin, TX: Health and Human Services Commission.
The Conference Contact

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