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

Presented by:
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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
2006 Texas Children Demographic Data

• Number of Black/African American Children increased from 2000 to 2005 by 3%
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
HHSC Healthy Marriage Support Activities: The Partners

- 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

- Healthy Marriage Development
  Partners: Head Start Laredo, Head Start Fort Bend, Head Start Fort Worth, Head Start Corpus Christi
Texas Healthy Marriage
Client Service Benefits

- Relationship and Premarital Education Skills Classes
- Weekend retreats and mentoring for Couples
- Booster sessions to teach parenting and life skills
- Research studies to guide future program and policy development
- Technical assistance with developing a local domestic violence protocol
- Social events and date nights
- Community education and training
- Referrals to existing community services
- Reduction of “marriage penalties” in benefit programs
- 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) 2603 and 2605, 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.

Program Spotlight

Highlight Harris County
Healthy Marriage Program
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

[Map of Texas showing regional offices and regions: High Plains, Northwest Texas, Metroplex, Upper East Texas, West Texas, Upper Rio Grande, Central Texas, Southeast Texas, Gulf Coast, Upper South Texas, Lower South Texas.]
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
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 RH
- 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)
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Benefits of SMAM Partnership

• Sherry Matthews is a full-service advocacy marketing firm known for strategic ideas, extensive media relationships, award-winning creative and strong community partnership base.

• Sherry Matthews knows how to reach our state’s diverse population, and are as comfortable and competent crafting campaigns in Spanish as we are in English.

• Sherry Matthews has a 20-year track record of reaching Texans to produce results.
Outreach Materials

Certificate of Completion

This certificate is awarded to
PAT DAVIS & ALEX LOPEZ
For completion of an 8-hour Premarital Education Course

Twogether
Free & Fun Couples Workshop
Happy couples make strong families. Join us for a free healthy marriage workshop for you and your partner. Learn how to stick to each other’s advice, solve problems together, strengthen your communication, and keep the fun alive.

For dates, times, and to register, contact:
Wells Fargo Adult Development Center, Inc.
Linda@WFAnc.org; 214-239-2599
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Healthy Marriage Creative

Direct Mail

LEARN TO LOVE FOR LIFE
APRENDA A AMARSE PARA TODA LA VIDA
Brochure

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 us for a series of four, one-hour workshops held at Head Start centers in your community. Instructor-led discussions will provide easy-to-understand 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 ignoring me!"
— April, 20
Laredo

"My daughter and son-in-law are almost acting like newlyweds again… and they have married nearly twenty years!"
— Maria, 49
San Antonio

"I refused to go at first. But when she said other couples like us would share. Once I went, I was surprised how it made things better. Our kids have noticed the difference, too!"
— June, 35
San Jose

"We learned how to work out our differences… solely without shouting."
— Rebecca, 22
Fort Worth

"She seems to understand me better… it’s more peaceful with us. We’re getting along better than we first started dating."
— June, 23
San Juan

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

SPREAD THE LOVE,
If you know someone who would benefit from attending these free informative workshops, share this brochure along with our email in your community.
Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing
Healthy Marriage Creative

Outdoor
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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