Mississippi Healthy Marriage Initiative

The Mississippi Department of Human Services

*Donald R. Taylor, Executive Director*

Division of Economic Assistance

Healthy Marriage Unit
Mississippi Resident Marriage Survey

- 81% believe that couples who have children together should be married.
- 97.3% believe fathers are as important as mothers for the proper development of children.
- 96.2% believe divorce is a serious national problem in the United States today.
- 91.9% believe couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances.

Source: "With This Ring...A Survey of Marriage in Mississippi" by the Mississippi Center for Public Policy
The Healthy Marriage Initiative was developed by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) to promote the well being of children in Mississippi by encouraging the involvement of mothers and fathers in their lives.
The MDHS Healthy Marriage Unit was developed in SFY 2005 to collaborate with community organizations, educational institutions and faith-based groups to provide the appropriate skills based relationship education and services to youth and unmarried couples.
MDHS and Healthy Marriage

- Sub grants
- Public Awareness
- Partnerships
- Looking Ahead
Sub grants

- 16 grants through 11 organizations.
- Healthy Marriage Sub grants cover 61% of the counties in Mississippi.
- Reach an average of 497 new clients a month.
- An average 639 clients receive continual service each month.
Sub grants cont.

- **Services offered by Sub Grantees:**
  - Healthy Marriage Education Classes to residents earning at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.
  - Healthy Marriage Retreats for married couples
  - “Lunch and Learns” for communities
  - Community Marriage Hall of Fame
  - Media Outreach
Public Awareness

- As of December 2007, the Healthy Marriage Unit presented the message to the following individuals (unduplicated count):
  - 1386 adults
  - 1082 youths
  - 2468 total individuals served
Healthy Marriage Week Declared in Mississippi February 7-14, 2008.

- Healthy Marriage Rally held at State Capitol.

- Healthy Marriage Luncheon.
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
Office of the Governor

APROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the "Healthy Marriage Unit" within the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Economic Assistance requires the implementation of a Mississippi Marriage Week beginning February 7, 2008, and ending February 14, 2008, to provide an opportunity to focus our efforts on building strong and healthy relationships and promoting the well-being of all children by encouraging the involvement of mothers and fathers in their lives, and

WHEREAS, citizens can be taught skills essential to establishing healthy relationships; and

WHEREAS, marriage has been proven to have numerous positive benefits for both men and women such as better emotional health, longer life spans, greater wealth, reduction in poverty, and less domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, marriage is worthy of the support and encouragement of all members of society for its ability to uplift individuals and children because it provides a framework for positive and supportive role models for children;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Haley Barbour, Governor of the State of Mississippi, do hereby proclaim the week beginning February 7, 2008, and ending February 14, 2008, as

MISSISSIPPI MARRIAGE WEEK

in the State of Mississippi.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Mississippi to be affixed.

DONE in the City of Jackson, on the twenty-ninth day of January in the year of our Lord, two thousand and eight, and of the independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and thirty-second.

Haley Barbour
Public Awareness cont.

- “Mississippi Marriage Day” one hundred forty-seven (147) people in attendance.

- Conducted a Marriage Retreat for husbands and wives in the Hinds County area with seventy (70) couples in attendance.

- Conducted a marriage rally in south Mississippi with two hundred (200) in attendance.
Public Awareness cont.

- **Statewide Billboards**
  - Space purchased in major markets across the state.
  - Four primary advertisements utilized.
I Do is FOREVER

Healthy Marriage Mississippi
1-800-590-0818
Building Solid Relationships
Does Your Marriage Need A Tune-up?
Will this *deer* keep you warm at night?
Public Awareness cont.

- Town Hall meetings
  - Conducted meetings throughout the state to inform clergy and community leaders about the healthy marriage program.

- MDHS Staff Awareness
  - Conducted training for staff members facilitated by nationally recognized healthy marriage educators.
Partnerships

- MDHS has partnered with the Mississippi State University Extension Service to ensure healthy marriage education is provided statewide.

- MDHS and the Extension Service are developing plans to provide ongoing PREP training.
LOOKING AHEAD

- Future Plans - continue funding healthy marriage programs at the local level, establishing coalitions with community and faith-based organizations and serving as a resource for these organizations.
Family First Resource Centers serving counties statewide will be brought under the MDHS Abstinence and Healthy Marriage Unit to utilize as a resource for educating in the areas of:

- Parenting
- Abstinence
- Healthy Marriage
- Fatherhood
QUESTIONS

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