

Partnering Head Start With:



*The Healthy Marriage/
Responsible Fatherhood
Connection*

Administration for Children and Families

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Healthy Marriage

- Helping couples who choose marriage for themselves to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages.
- A strategy for achieving child well-being, recognizing that children do best when raised by their two parents in a committed, healthy marriage.

Why Healthy Marriage Matters

- Married couples build more wealth on average than singles or cohabiting couples.
- Children in a two parent, married household enjoy better physical health, on average, than children in non-married households.
- Marriage reduces the risk of adults and children either perpetuating or being victimized by violent crime.

Benefits of Marriage for Children

- 9% of children under six in two-parent households are poor - compared to 47% of those living in single-mother households.
- 45% of children raised by divorced mothers and 69% raised by never-married mothers live in or near poverty.

What the Healthy Marriage Initiative *IS NOT*.

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

Culturally Competent Strategies

- Culture, age, race, ethnicity, gender, education, religion, and socio-economic status can all influence individual and community responses to marriages issues.
- Not simply a low-income or minority initiative.
- African American as well as Hispanic and Refugee issues involved in the Healthy Marriage Initiative.

Responsible Fatherhood

Makes A Difference For Children

- Emotional security, curiosity, and enhanced math and verbal skills;
- Fewer behavioral problems, higher levels of sociability; improved school performance and reduced involvement with the criminal justice system.
- Higher school grades, greater school enjoyment, and lower chances of suspension, expulsion, and dropping out of school.
- Girls with a positive father/daughter relationship do better academically, and are less likely to engage in early sexual involvement and in the use of alcohol and drugs.

Fatherless Homes Create a Negative Cycle

- 24 million children in America live apart from their fathers.
- Boys who grow up without fathers are more likely to become unmarried fathers themselves at a young age, perpetuating the cycle of absentee fatherhood.
- Girls growing up without fathers are more likely to fall victim to early sexual involvement and teenage pregnancy, perpetuating the cycle of single-parenthood.

Children from Fatherless Homes are:

- 5 times more likely to commit suicide.
- 32 times more likely to run away.
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders.
- 14 times more likely to commit rape.
- 9 times more likely to drop out of school.
- 10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances.
- 9 times more likely to end up in a state operated institution.
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison.

THE CONNECTION

Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood

Two initiatives sharing a common vision for:

- Improving the lives of children and families.
- Promoting relationship skills and character education.
- Providing intervention, prevention, mental health and crisis management services.
- Assisting individuals and families to attain economic empowerment.
- Facilitating faith and community-based involvement to ensure success.
- Engendering hope for the future.

Children are the winners of a successful Healthy Marriage/Fatherhood Connection. Children from two-parent households are:

- Less than half as likely to have emotional or behavioral problems.
- A third as likely to use illegal drugs, alcohol or tobacco.
- 44% less likely to be physically abused, or neglected.
- Boys are only half as likely to commit a crime leading to incarceration by their thirties.

A Successful Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood Connection Reduces Domestic Violence

CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey 2005:

- 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men in the United States are victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives.
- In households with incomes under \$15,000 per year, 35.5% of women and 20.7% of men suffered violence from an intimate partner.
- 23.6% of women and 11.5% of men aged 18 years or more have a lifetime history of intimate partner violence victimization.
- 1 in 5 female high school students reports being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. Abused girls are significantly more likely to get involved in other risky behaviors. They are 4 to 6 times more likely to get pregnant and 8 to 9 times more likely to have tried to commit suicide.
- As many as 324,000 women each year experience intimate partner violence during their pregnancy.

Promoting Joint Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood Activities

- Activities for men that promote or sustain marriage, including counseling, mentoring, enhancing relationship skills, disseminating information, etc.
- Promoting responsible male parenting including skills-based parenting education, healthy marriage training
- Improve the economic status of fathers and husbands, including work first services, job training, dissemination of employment materials, etc.
- Promoting the joint role of men as fathers and husbands including development of a national media campaign and the establishment of a clearinghouse to assist states and communities in their efforts.

Why An ACF Corporate Vision?

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides national leadership and direction for comprehensive and supportive programs for vulnerable children and families. A core strategy for improving the well-being of children is the increased focus on healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood.

- *External and Internal Communication.*
- *Educate and Inform.*
- *The Tipping Point.*

ACF's Corporate Strategy

The Partnership with Head Start

- Head Start's passionate commitment to impact the total family.
- Taking Head Start Parent Involvement to new heights through the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Initiatives.
- Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood – ideas whose time has come – ideas to energize and revitalize Head Start for the 21st century!

ACF's Corporate Strategy

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ACF and the National Head Start Association (NHSA)

ACF's MOU Responsibilities Include:

- Promote and distribute HM and RF materials to Head Start and Early Head Start programs/stakeholders.
- Advise on strategies to increase of HM and RF awareness.
- Publicize the MOU and support Head Start HM and RF training opportunities including "Heads Up" Satellite Network, the NHSA webinar series, and NHSA's Parent and Annual Conferences.
- Share best practices models and profile summaries of the 24 Head Start Healthy Marriage grantees.

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NHSA's MOU Responsibilities Include:

- Publicize the MOU and HM/RF messages through utilization of NHSA's newsletters, websites, and conferences.
- Plan and implement an orientation for State and Regional Head Start Association leaders on the tenets and expectations of the MOU by working with ACF Healthy Marriage Specialists.
- Publicize the MOU at National and State conferences and assist Head Start and Early Head Start programs to recognize the importance of Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood
- Conduct training opportunities for the Head Start community including the "Heads Up" Satellite Network, NHSA webinar series and at the NHSA's Parent and Annual Conferences.