

# Beyond Marriage Licenses

*Efforts in States to Strengthen  
Marriage and Two-Parent Families*

*A State-by-State Snapshot*



APRIL 2004

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# Part One

## The Story of Efforts in States to Strengthen Marriage and Two-Parent Families

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### Introduction

The popular understanding of the role government plays in marriage is generally limited to two functions performed by state governments: granting marriage licenses and issuing divorce decrees. Beyond that, the widespread assumption has been that marriage is a private issue, best left to individuals, couples, and perhaps religious institutions. However, in the past decade, leaders at the national, state, and local levels have looked at expanding the role of government in marriage, reflecting, in part, rising concern by policymakers and the public alike about the apparent negative effects of single parenthood on children.<sup>1</sup> The promotion of healthy marriages is now on the policy agenda.

This report is the first to provide a state-by-state snapshot of activities begun since the mid-1990s that are *explicitly* designed to strengthen and promote marriage and to reduce divorce and that involve some level of government as a sponsor, funder, or otherwise active partner. In addition, reflecting CLASP's Marriage-Plus perspective (see box on p. 6), the report includes activities designed to promote cooperative relationships between parents who are not married. (This report, however, does not address the important—and much-debated—issue of same-sex marriage. For resources on that issue and others not covered in this report, see Appendix 1.)

This report comes at an important moment.<sup>2</sup> With the prospect of dedicated funding for activities to promote healthy marriage becoming available under a reauthorized Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) welfare program, state policymakers are interested in what kinds of initiatives have already been implemented. In the past couple of years, for example, officials from at least two dozen states have attended marriage-related meetings sponsored by the federal government and by state government associations. Even if a new federal funding stream for marriage promotion activities is not created, interest in promoting marriage and reducing divorce rates is likely to continue to grow at community, state, and federal levels.

## Background: The Growing Government Interest in Marriage

Marriage and divorce have typically been viewed as the province of state law. It is state law that determines the conditions of entry into—and exit out of—marriage and that establishes the legal obligations and rights of spouses.

Over the past century, in response to the women’s rights movement and other major cultural shifts, changes in state law have transformed the institution of marriage in many important ways. By the middle of the twentieth century, state law and court decisions had granted wives rights to own property and gradually unraveled most of the other legal underpinnings of patriarchy, although it wasn’t until the mid-1980s that state courts declared that marital rape was illegal. By the early 1980s, most states had adopted so-called “no fault” divorce laws—in which divorce can usually be obtained by mutual consent and/or on the demand of at least one party<sup>3</sup>—essentially ending the government’s role in deciding the appropriate grounds for divorce. This change, in particular, has contributed to what some have called the new “privatization” of marriage.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, rising rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing and divorce resulted in a three-fold increase since 1960 in the proportion of children growing up in single-parent households. Studies published in the late 1980s and early 1990s identified the negative effects of divorce on many children and the greater likelihood of disadvantage experienced by children raised by single parents.<sup>5</sup> This research helped fuel the concern about child well-being that began to be translated into policies to reduce the incidence

of single parenting at national, state, and local levels in the early to mid-1990s.

At first, state reform efforts related to marriage focused primarily on legislation to make it more difficult to divorce. Next, some communities and states began to promote policies and programs that would prepare people better for marriage. In these early state marriage initiatives, the decline in marriage was considered to be a problem for the general public; no special effort was made to reach low-income populations.

### *Welfare Reform*

At the national level, however, policymakers interested in family formation focused primarily on the rising rate of out-of-wedlock childbearing and its link to welfare and other social costs. In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which turned the federal welfare program into a block grant to states, was the first federal law to explicitly promote marriage and encourage the formation of two-parent families.

Most of the public debate about the 1996 welfare reform focused on requirements for welfare recipients to work and on the imposition of time limits for welfare assistance. Little attention was paid at the time to the fact that three of the four purposes of the new law referred to marriage and family formation:

1. to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives,
2. to end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and marriage,
3. to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and
4. to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

The welfare law gave states considerable flexibility with respect to how they spend TANF monies. For instance, while

## The “Marriage-Plus” Perspective

CLASP’s work in couples and marriage policy is guided by a “Marriage-Plus” perspective. The “plus” in Marriage-Plus signifies a set of broader goals, more flexible and comprehensive strategies, and more diverse actors than proposed by many marriage promotion advocates.

**Goals of Marriage-Plus.** The primary purpose of any healthy marriage promotion initiative should be to promote the well-being of *all* children. The Marriage-Plus approach has two overarching goals. First, policies and programs should aim to help more children grow up with their two biological, married parents in a healthy, stable relationship. However, for many parents, marriage is not a feasible or desirable option. Thus, the second goal is to help these parents—whether never-married, separated, divorced, or remarried—to be financially capable and responsible and to cooperate, whenever appropriate, in raising their children. These are not alternative goals. Children need us to pursue both.

**Principles of Marriage-Plus.** The Marriage-Plus approach is guided by several principles. “Healthy” marriage, not marriage for its own sake, should be encouraged and supported. Participation in marriage-related programs should be voluntary and tailored to meet the diverse needs of different populations. Strategies should be designed based on the best available research evidence and should be carefully evaluated. Finally, a Marriage-Plus approach focuses on the front end (making marriages better to be in), not the back end (making marriages more difficult to get out of).

**Scope of Activities.** Social science research has identified a wide range of economic, educational, legal, and cultural factors that affect whether couples marry, as well as the quality and stability of marriages. Therefore, efforts to promote or strengthen marriage should include a variety of strategies. Some may explicitly focus on marriage; others may have other primary goals, yet may indirectly have positive effects on marriage. For example, there is evidence that increasing parental employment and income, reducing work stress, and preventing teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births can all contribute to strengthening marriage and improving co-parenting by unmarried parents.

**The Role of Government.** While this report focuses on the role of government in marriage promotion, a Marriage-Plus approach is not the responsibility of government alone. Many parts of the community—including the legal, education, health, business, faith, and media sectors—all have important roles to play and need to work in partnership with public officials to pursue these goals.

For more information, read the CLASP Couples and Marriage Policy Brief Series:

- No. 1: *Marriage and Government: Strange Bedfellows?* by Theodora Ooms (August 2002)
- No. 2: *More Than a Dating Service? State Activities Designed to Strengthen and Promote Marriage* by Mary Parke and Theodora Ooms (October 2002)
- No. 3: *Are Married Parents Really Better for Children? What Research Says About the Effects of Family Structure on Child Well-Being* by Mary Parke (May 2003)
- No. 4: *Who Are “Fragile Families” and What Do We Know About Them?* By Mary Parke (January 2004)

To view these briefs, visit: [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).



spending related to purposes (1) and (2) is limited to “needy” families, as defined by the states, purposes (3) and (4) are not directed solely at needy families. Also two-parent families are not defined in the law, and thus states are free to establish their own reasonable definitions.

How have states pursued the TANF family formation goals since 1996? The majority of states have changed policies to make it easier to provide cash assistance to two-parent families. Some have used TANF dollars to fund teen pregnancy prevention, and others have funded responsible fatherhood programs, which serve non-custodial parents. Only seven states have dedicated significant TANF dollars specifically to strengthen and promote marriage and couple relationships.<sup>6</sup>

However, as TANF reauthorization approached, many conservatives complained that the states had not done enough to pursue the program’s family formation goals. In 2001, the new Bush Administration, supported by several Congressional leaders, made marriage promotion one of its priorities, which quickly became one of the most controversial topics in the reauthorization debate. In May 2002, the Republican House passed the Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act (H.R. 4737), which, among other things, would have amended the TANF program to encourage states to make greater efforts to promote marriage and, to a lesser extent, responsible fatherhood. The most important provisions related to family formation included:

- ✦ A revision of purpose four to promote *healthy* two-parent *married* families and *encourage responsible fatherhood* [new language in italics].
- ✦ A new competitive grants program for states to be spent on a variety of allowable activities relating to marriage<sup>7</sup>—\$200 million a year (\$100 million federal monies with a dollar-for-dollar state match).
- ✦ A Marriage Research and Demon-

stration Funds program allowing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to spend \$100 million a year for five years for research, demonstration projects, and technical assistance primarily related to the marriage activities defined in the competitive grants program.

In addition, the bill authorized \$100 million over five years for a grant program, the Promotion and Support of Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage. However, these funds would not come from the TANF block grant but would need separate appropriations. In total, the proposed legislation earmarked \$1.6 billion over five years for the promotion and support of marriage. Most of the funds would come from redirecting bonuses to states available in the 1996 law: the \$100 million out-of-wedlock birth bonus (awarded annually to the five states with the greatest percentage reduction in out-of-wedlock births—without an increase in abortion rates) and a portion of the high-performance bonus (awarded annually to states for the highest achievements in various measures intended to further the goals of TANF).

Although welcomed by some, these marriage promotion proposals were met by skepticism and opposition from many quarters.<sup>8</sup> For example, some have expressed fears that women may be coerced or “bribed” to enter hasty and ill-considered marriages or be forced to remain in abusive marriages. Others were concerned that privileging marriage would mean discriminating against single parents. Some (including CLASP) asserted that the bill allocated too much money for marriage programs and that these monies were to be spent on too narrow a range of activities.<sup>9</sup> Some also expressed concern that there were not sufficient protections, especially against domestic violence.

In June 2002, the Senate Finance Committee passed a bipartisan TANF

reauthorization bill that allocated less money (\$1 billion) for marriage-related programs and considerably broadened the scope of activities that could be funded to include teen pregnancy prevention and other programs that decreased out-of-wedlock childbearing or strengthened marriage but that didn't include explicit marriage-related content. This bill was never brought to the floor of the Senate for a vote, however, and TANF was not reauthorized in 2002.

In 2003, the House passed a new TANF reauthorization bill (H.R. 4) that was nearly identical to the House bill of the previous year.<sup>10</sup> A similar bill was voted on by the Senate Finance Committee, however as this report goes to press, the full Senate has not acted on TANF reauthorization.

### *Federal Funding for Marriage-Related Projects, 2001–2003*

In 2001, Wade Horn, the Assistant Secretary overseeing the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, declared that a Healthy Marriage Initiative was one of nine ACF priorities.<sup>11</sup> In 2002–2003, ACF used several existing funding vehicles within the agency (independent of TANF) to commit at least \$90 million over a number of years for marriage-related demonstration grants, research and evaluation projects, and technical assistance.

**Demonstration Grants** (individual grants are briefly described in the state profiles):

- \* *Office of Child Support.* In 2002, three marriage-related grants were funded under the Special Improvement Project (SIP) program and were intended to encourage new ways to approach unwed parents to emphasize the importance of healthy marriage to a children's well-being. In 2003, four five-year grants were awarded to states under the Section 1115 waiver authority (of the Social Security Act), which authorizes states

to conduct experimental, pilot, or demonstration projects that are likely to assist in promoting the objectives of the child support program. These projects are "testing new strategies to support healthy marriage and parental relationships with the goals of improving the well-being of children, promoting paternity establishment, and increasing the financial and emotional support to children."<sup>12</sup>

- \* *Children's Bureau Discretionary Grants.* In October 2003, the Children's Bureau awarded seven grants to state and county child welfare agencies to promote healthy marriage and family formation as a means of achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families. The projects target biological, foster, and adoptive families in the child welfare system and are designed to support and strengthen marital and co-parenting relationships. The grants were awarded for three years in the amount of \$200,000 per year.

- \* *Child Welfare Training Grants for Healthy Marriage and Family Formation.* In October 2003, the Children's Bureau awarded five-year grants to five public and non-profit institutions of higher education. The grant activities included developing, field testing, implementing, evaluating, and disseminating competency-based curricula and training for front-line and/or supervisory child welfare staff to help them effectively address issues of healthy marriage and family formation in the child welfare system.

- \* *The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).* In 2002, ORR gave a discretionary grant to two national organizations, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Office of Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS), to collaboratively launch pilot programs in eight cities called the Refugee Family Strengthening Project. Additional

grants were given to nine national refugee resettlement organizations. The purpose of these projects was to ease the integration process and strengthen refugee families and marriage by providing communication, listening, conflict resolution, and financial management skills to refugee families (including Somali, Somali Bantu, Vietnamese, Congolese, Haitians, Cubans, and Sudanese, among others), and to increase community understanding of the many challenges refugee families face during the resettlement experience. In October 2003, the HIAS received a \$200,000 grant to continue to provide these services in four of the original eight pilot sites, and the USCCB/MRS received \$1 million to continue the other four sites and expand the services to a total of 20 cities.<sup>13</sup>

- ✦ *The Office of Community Services (OCS)*. In September 2003, OCS awarded \$40,000 in grants under its block grant training and technical assistance program to Community Action Agencies in three communities for relationship and marriage education programs for low-income families.

**Technical Assistance, Research and Evaluation Grants and Contracts.** In 2001–2003, ACF awarded several grants and contracts to national organizations and research firms to provide a variety of technical assistance, research, and evaluation activities. These include:

- ✦ A 15-month, \$330,000 contract was awarded by the Office of Community Services to the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED) in Washington, DC, to explore how financial asset-building strategies can contribute to strengthening marriage by helping families gain economic self-sufficiency. The project links marital counseling and marriage enrichment with financial literacy and asset development. ISED provides consultation and technical assistance to over 300 organizations around the country to help low-income families build financial assets, including the Individual Development Account Network.<sup>14</sup>
- ✦ In 2002, ACF funded the Lewin Group to provide technical assistance to states and communities interested in developing community coalitions and comprehensive strategies to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood. The Peer to Peer Technical Assistance Network, also funded by ACF, has conducted several meetings of state policy officials interested in healthy marriage promotion.<sup>15</sup>
- ✦ In 2002–2003, the ACF Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation funded several significant evaluation and research projects:
  - The Building Strong Families Project is a large-scale, comprehensive demonstration and random-assignment evaluation of programs that are designed to strengthen the relationships and support the marital aspirations of unmarried couples around the time of the birth of a child. Primary contractor: Mathematica Policy Research Inc. Award: \$19 million over nine years.<sup>16</sup>
  - The Supporting Healthy Marriages project is an eight-site random-assignment evaluation of interventions designed to support marriage among low-income couples in their childrearing years who are married or planning to marry. Primary contractor: MDRC. Award: \$38.5 million over nine years.
  - Evaluation of community-wide initiatives to promote healthy marriage. The evaluation will document implementation and impact in 8–12 sites. Contractors: RTI International and the Urban Institute. Award: \$20.4 million over seven years.
  - Exploring options and making recommendations for addressing gaps in

national, state, and local marriage and divorce statistics. Primary contractor: the Lewin Group. Award: \$979,160 over two years (jointly funded by the HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation).

- Documenting and analyzing marriage incentives (and disincentives) for low-income families in state and federal tax and transfer programs. Primary contractor: The Urban Institute. Award: \$464,451 over two years.
- Assessing the state of the art in measuring healthy marriage. Grantee: Child Trends, Inc., through the NICHD Family and Child Well-Being Network. Award: \$260,000 over two years.

### *Goals and Limitations of This Report*

This report seeks to provide an introductory map to the emerging landscape of couples and marriage policy. We hope it will stimulate an informed discussion about strategies that are most effective with particular populations, about the importance of building capacity to implement these new efforts, about what unanticipated positive and negative consequences might result from these programs, and about what gaps in knowledge remain.

Before presenting the findings of our research, we offer three caveats. First, we want to make it clear that inclusion of an activity in this report does not imply endorsement by CLASP or the authors. In fact, while some of the activities we describe appear promising and reasonable, others seem to us not very useful or possibly harmful.<sup>17</sup>

Second, this report does not aim to document how the new policies and programs are, in fact, being implemented nor what effects they are having on marriage and divorce. Third, while we reviewed a wide variety of sources, this re-

port does not claim to be an exhaustive inventory of all of the new government-related marriage activities occurring in the states. In some cases, the examples are only illustrative. (For more on how the information for this report was gathered, see Appendix I: Method and Primary Sources, p. 66.)

Couples and marriage policy is a fast-moving field. Each week, we learn about new activities in the planning stages and proposals awaiting approval and funding. This report remains a snapshot of a particular time and is generally current as of Fall 2003—including information about new federal grants awarded in October 2003.

## Summary of Findings

What have we learned? Overall, although the field of couples and marriage policy is still in its infancy, more is happening in the states than is generally realized. However, the degree of interest in this issue varies considerably among states. Since the mid-1990s, every state has made at least one policy change or undertaken at least one activity designed to promote marriage, strengthen two-parent families, or reduce divorce. The large majority of states (36) have revised their TANF eligibility rules to treat one-parent and two-parent households the same. Nineteen states have set up separate state-funded welfare programs for two-parent families, which makes it easier for them to provide assistance to these families. For eight states, TANF policy changes were the only type of marriage-related activity identified.

Governors, senior public officials, and/or legislatures in nine states (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah) have declared strengthening marriage to be a public goal, and most of these leaders have followed up by launching marriage promotion programs. Eight states have made significant

changes to their marriage and divorce laws. In 40 states, government-funded programs provide couples- and marriage-related services in selected communities or counties, most often on a pilot basis. And, of these, seven states—Arizona, Louisiana, Michigan, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, and Virginia—and several communities have dedicated significant TANF funds to support marriage-related activities.

Only nine states and one tribal agency offer welfare recipients financial incentives or “bonuses” to marry, and none require welfare mothers to attend any marriage programs.

While it was not the purpose of this study to document the degree of support or opposition to these new marriage initiatives, we did note that in a few states (particularly Arizona, Florida, and Oklahoma) developers of marriage and fatherhood initiatives were working with representatives of the domestic violence community—a constituency which in other states has been a vocal critic of marriage promotion efforts.

There appears to be no clear demographic or economic pattern that helps explain why some states have more marriage-related activity than others, although (with the exception of Michigan) the states in which there is quite a lot of government-related activity going on—Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Michigan, Oklahoma, Utah, and Virginia—are located in the south or west, and would generally be characterized as more conservative politically. Among these “high-activity” states, the majority have very high child poverty rates, but a few do not. Some have very high divorce rates, others have high rates of out-of-wedlock births, and, in others, these demographic indicators are not remarkable.<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting that there is little marriage-related policy activity in the northeastern states, and two of the three most-populous states (California and New York) have no appreciable state marriage initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

To what extent have the TANF family formation goals and the availability of TANF funds driven the interest in launching couples and marriage activities in the states? In several of the high-activity states (Arizona, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Utah), the marriage initiatives were created independent of TANF and were initially not targeted to low-income populations. However, as plans evolved and interest in funding new services emerged, TANF became—and continues to be—the major funding source for the marriage activities in these states. And the states using TANF funds are increasingly targeting their marriage-related services to low-income families. In addition, as noted above, a number of new state demonstration projects are being funded with other ACF sources. Some states fund marriage-related services from non-federal sources, such as the Children’s Trust in Alabama and Family Trust Fund in Texas, which receives monies from increased marriage license fees.

Perhaps the most surprising finding of this study is the diversity of initiatives underway in states to strengthen marriage and/or two-parent families and reduce divorce. This report organizes them into four main categories: (1) state policy initiatives, commissions, and campaigns; (2) changes in state marriage and divorce law designed to strengthen marriage and reduce divorce; (3) programs, activities, and services; and (4) policy changes related to marriage and two-parent families in TANF and child support programs.

We explain each of these categories in detail below and then step back to make some comments about trends, gaps, and possible future directions. The state profiles (see p. 23) are organized according to these four categories, and Appendix II summarizes the information across all states and the District of Columbia. In addition, Appendix III provides selected contact information for initiatives in the seven “high-activity” states.

### **1. State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns**

In 10 states (Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Texas, and Utah), the governor, legislators, or other high-ranking policy officials have publicly focused on marriage-related issues through one or more of the following actions:

- \* Launching major policy initiatives, including the enactment of laws or high-level executive branch actions, that establish and fund programs designed to specifically promote and strengthen marriage and reduce divorce;
- \* Establishing marriage commissions or councils charged with developing and implementing specific policies;
- \* Holding summits or other events that bring together various groups to discuss marriage-strengthening policies;
- \* Conducting media campaigns that promote marriage or discourage divorce;
- \* Issuing proclamations recognizing the importance of marriage as a public good or declaring marriage as the foundation for child well-being and healthy communities; and
- \* Publishing marriage handbooks to be given to couples who apply for marriage licenses.

### **2. Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law**

State law governs the terms and conditions under which individuals marry and divorce and determines spousal rights and responsibilities. Since the mid-1990s, some states have introduced incentives for couples to take marriage preparation courses before they marry. In addition, a number of state legislatures have considered the option of covenant marriages, in which divorce is somewhat more difficult to obtain. The state profiles include information about both types of changes enacted in marriage law:<sup>20</sup>

- \* Marriage License Fee Reduction: Five

states (Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Tennessee) have enacted laws that reduce marriage license fees for engaged couples who participate in marriage preparation classes or pre-marital counseling.

- \* Covenant Marriage Law: Three states (Arizona, Arkansas, and Louisiana) have enacted covenant marriage laws, and legislation has been introduced in at least two dozen other states. Under these laws, couples applying for a marriage license must choose to be married under the existing marriage law in the state or under a new covenant marriage contract. The latter generally requires marriage education or counseling prior to the marriage, as well as before divorce. Divorces can be obtained only upon specific grounds, such as adultery, abuse, or abandonment, or after a long period of separation, typically two years.<sup>21</sup>

### **3. Programs, Activities, and Services**

This category includes programs, activities, and services that aim to directly promote and strengthen healthy marriage and two-parent families. To be included in this report, some level of government—federal, state, or local—must be involved, whether as the originator, a funder, or an active partner with non-government organizations. Examples of activities in this category include couples and marriage education and support for adults, relationships and marriage education for high school students, and fatherhood programs with co-parenting or marriage components. Also included are “capacity building” activities—such as training individuals to provide marriage-related services—and public education, community awareness, and outreach components of service programs. In addition, this report describes services sponsored by two often-overlooked government sources: the armed services and state cooperative extension services,

which are generally based in state land-grant universities.

In most of the states profiled here, couples and marriage-related programs, activities, and services are confined to only a few communities. In Oklahoma and Florida, however, some couples and marriage activities are statewide.

**Couples and Marriage Education for Adults.** Since the mid-1990s, a growing number of states and communities have started providing couples and marriage education, but there is no way of knowing exactly how many of these programs there are.<sup>22</sup> (Thirty-two states have at least one program in this category.) Many of these programs grew out of decades of research on what makes relationships and marriages succeed or fail, building on curricula and couple inventories first developed in the 1960s and 1970s (and offered primarily to engaged couples). Couples and marriage education programs now vary considerably in length, content, and format, as well as in the settings in which they are offered (including community centers and houses of worship). Currently, most programs are curricula-based, presented in a classroom-style format, and aim to change attitudes and dispel myths about marriage and to teach relationship skills—especially related to communication and conflict resolution—to adults at various life stages: single, dating, engaged, newly married, marriages in crisis, and those who are remarried. Most of the programs were developed for middle-class couples,<sup>23</sup> although, with TANF funding, several states have begun to adapt curricula for other populations. While these programs have generally proven popular with participants, the only curriculum model that has been evaluated to determine its long-term impact on couples is the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP).<sup>24</sup>

Other types of educational and support programs include couple mentoring of young, newly married couples or couples in crisis; pre-marital assessments

through the use of couple questionnaires; marriage enrichment/encounter days or weekends; and couple support groups.

In addition, some states are currently developing demonstration programs that focus on offering young, unmarried couples who have recently given birth—sometimes referred to as “fragile families”—a variety of services that also incorporate marriage and co-parenting components.

**Relationship and Marriage Education for High School Students.** Several nationally recognized curricula exist for teaching middle and high school students about skills for building successful relationships and marriages,<sup>25</sup> yet there is little information available about how many schools use them. Individual teachers, rather than school districts, often decide whether to use a particular curriculum. For example, Connections, one of the best-known curricula, is used in at least some schools in all but a few states; in California, it is being used in more than 200 locations.<sup>26</sup> The creators of relationship education curricula do not generally track how widely their products are used by a state or school district and, hence, how many students have taken these courses. Often, once a curriculum is sold, no follow-up with the school or program is attempted. The state profiles note six states in which curricula are being used in a significant number of high schools. These courses are generally offered as electives. Florida is the only state so far to require four hours of relationship and marriage education for high school graduation, but no particular curriculum is prescribed.

**Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components.** Over the last decade, there have been a growing number of state and community-based efforts designed specifically to promote the importance of fatherhood and to help fathers become more involved with their children. Among these, what are often called “responsible fatherhood” programs provide low-income,

non-custodial fathers (whether never-married, cohabiting, separated, or divorced) with job training and placement, child support payment assistance, peer support groups, parenting classes, legal assistance, and individual counseling.<sup>27</sup> This report, however, includes only those fatherhood programs that emphasize services to promote “team” or “co-parenting” and/or include some focus on marriage.

Why are some fatherhood programs getting involved in promoting co-parenting and marriage? For one, a 1998 review of the research has shown that the quality of a father’s relationship with the mother of his children is a major factor in his level of involvement with his children, whether the parents are married or not.<sup>28</sup> When non-custodial fathers do not get along with the mothers of their children, they are more likely to remove themselves from their children’s lives (and are also less likely to pay child support). While mediation and co-parenting classes are often offered to (or mandated for) divorcing parents by family courts, this is not the case for couples who have never married. Mediation services and co-parenting classes for never-married couples are designed to help non-custodial fathers repair relationships with the mothers of their children so they can co-parent effectively, which includes paying child support. More recently, a few fatherhood programs have begun to explore how to promote marriage, when appropriate, for some of these couples.

At least 11 states (Arizona, Florida, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia) are funding responsible fatherhood activities that promote co-parenting and/or marriage, and these are described briefly in this report. In addition, four national organizations are beginning to help state and community-based fatherhood programs incorporate a stronger focus on co-parenting and marriage.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Military Marriage-Related Programs.**

For at least two decades, the armed services have studied the impact of changes in family life on military recruitment, readiness, and productivity, as well as the effect of particular aspects of military life (i.e., frequent transfers and overseas deployments) that place serious stress on military couples, which contributes to what the military regards as unacceptably high levels of divorce and domestic violence in the military. In response, the different branches of the armed services have provided family support services for couples and single parents, such as spousal employment services, child care, special housing benefits for married couples, and family advocacy (family violence) services. The Air Force, for instance, requires family support centers to provide family life education programs at all bases, which often include marriage and relationships courses. Family support centers are also generally available at Navy bases.

Since 1990, the Marine Corps has trained chaplains and family support center staff in the PREP marriage education curriculum (see p. 13), which is now offered widely on a voluntary basis. In 2001, the Army launched a six-site pilot demonstration, the Building Strong and Ready Families (BSRF) program, which provides an enriched PREP program to married soldiers, including marital and health assessments and referrals, as well as marriage enrichment weekends.<sup>30</sup> In 2003, the Army made plans to expand the program to 17 brigades in the U.S. and to bases in Germany and Italy; however, this expansion has been significantly slowed down by the war in Iraq. The state profiles note Army bases in 11 states that have been or are expected to eventually participate in the multi-site BSRF program.

**State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services.** The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), a federal agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA),



seeks to promote human health and nutrition; strengthen children, youth, and families; and promote sustainable American communities. It links USDA education and research resources and programs with the system of universities and state cooperative extension offices in all counties, states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

Many cooperative extension county educators (sometimes called extension specialists) are trained family life educators. In cooperation with public and private system partners (for example, the armed services) and land grant universities, they provide a range of services to improve the well-being of families, including parenting education, family resource management, nutrition education, youth development, and life skills education for welfare families. Educational programs offered by family life extension specialists are typically offered in communities at no or low cost. Individual extension specialists have offered couples and marriage education in the past, but recently some state cooperative extension services have begun training more specialists to provide couples and marriage education and related services in more communities.<sup>31</sup> These state profiles describe significant new marriage-related activities currently being conducted by cooperative extension in six states (Alabama, Florida, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Utah). In addition, several family life extension specialists are developing a research-based National Extension Marriage and Couples Education curriculum model.<sup>32</sup>

**Multi-Sector Community Marriage Initiatives.** A growing number of communities are bringing together public officials, health professionals, community leaders, clergy, judges, and citizens to develop services to support healthy marriages. These multi-sector community initiatives often begin with a group of faith leaders who agree to require premarital preparation for all couples wishing to be married in their houses of wor-

ship. Gradually, other leaders in the community add a variety of public education activities, events, and services, both secular and religious. We report on five multi-sector initiatives to strengthen marriage and reduce divorce—in Wilmington, Delaware; Greater Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cleveland, Ohio; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Washington State.

#### ***4. Policy Changes Related to Marriage and Two-Parent Families in TANF and Child Support***

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA) established the TANF welfare program, replacing an entitlement program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), with block grants to the states.<sup>33</sup> As noted previously, three out of the four purposes of the 1996 welfare law are related to family formation—namely to promote marriage, reduce out-of-wedlock childbearing, and encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

States were given considerable flexibility in determining the rules for their state TANF programs. Most states made an effort to address the TANF family formation goals. Many eliminated the stricter two-parent family eligibility requirements. A few offered financial incentives for marriage. Some set up separate state-funded programs for two-parent families (to avoid incurring the financial penalties for failing to meet the higher federal work participation rates imposed on two-parent families). A couple of states modified child support regulations that may discourage marriage. Each of these policy options are discussed in detail below, and the state profiles describe any changes that states have made in these regulations to meet the family formation goals.

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility.** In 1988, the Family Support Act required all states to serve two-parent families under the AFDC-UP (unemployed parent)

program, which had been an option for states previously. Under AFDC-UP, two-parent families (whether married or unmarried) were eligible for assistance only if the parent designated as the “principal wage earner” was (1) considered to be unemployed or underemployed, meaning he or she was employed less than 100 hours per month (referred to as the “100-hour rule”), and (2) if he or she could meet certain work history requirements.<sup>34</sup> These eligibility requirements created a barrier for some needy parents with a child in common to marry or live together. Program administrators and caseworkers found that these rules were especially likely to penalize very young parents who had little or no work experience and large families where one parent worked for low wages for more than 100 hours but remained financially needy. For these and other reasons, two-parent families in the AFDC-UP program historically constituted a very small proportion of the welfare caseload, somewhere between 5 to 7 percent in most states.<sup>35</sup>

With the flexibility under the 1996 welfare law, states had the freedom to eliminate the “special rules” that restricted the inclusion of two-parent families in state TANF programs, and many of them did so in whole or in part.<sup>36</sup> We found that, as of August 2002, 36 states now base two-parent family eligibility for TANF cash assistance solely on financial circumstances.<sup>37</sup> These states have eliminated both the 100-hour rule and the special work history requirements, and they no longer limit receipt of assistance to two-parent families in which a parent is incapacitated or “unemployed.” Eleven states have partially eliminated the higher requirements.

However, the TANF law did require states to impose a higher work participation rate on two-parent families than on single-parent families—90 percent versus 50 percent. These different rates apparently reflected an assumption that in two-parent families there would be no

good reason why at least one parent shouldn’t be working or in a work program. This has turned out not to be the case. TANF administrators have learned that many of these families have significant barriers to employment—for example, when one parent is a full-time caretaker of the other parent who is disabled—and hence it has been very difficult for states to meet these higher participation rates for two-parent families.

As of 2002, 22 states had set up separate state programs for two-parent families funded solely by state dollars.<sup>38</sup> Two-parent families served through these separate state-only programs are not subject to federal TANF participation and work requirements.<sup>39</sup> This enables states to serve two-parent families without risking incurring financial penalties for failing to meet the federal 90-percent work participation rates.

**Marriage “Incentives.”** Nine states have devised so-called marriage incentives for welfare recipients. West Virginia instituted a \$100 monthly “bonus” for recipients who marry or are already married to the father of their children. Three other states (Alabama, Mississippi, and Oklahoma) disregard a spouse’s earnings for a limited number of months when determining financial eligibility or grant amounts.<sup>40</sup> One TANF tribal agency in California also provides a one-time bonus of \$2,000 to welfare recipients upon marriage, as well as an additional \$1,500 if they have a traditional Native American wedding ceremony.

**Forgiveness of Child Support Arrears Upon Marriage or Reconciliation.** The average low-income, non-custodial father owes several thousand dollars in back child support payments. In many cases, these arrearages are owed to the state—not the families—as reimbursement for welfare payments made by the state on the children’s behalf. For low-income couples who wish to marry or reunite, these arrearages represent a significant economic burden and stressor for cou-

ples who are already struggling financially. Tennessee and Vermont<sup>41</sup> forgive child support arrearages owed by a non-custodial parent to the state if the parents marry or reunite.

## Conclusion

Since the mid-1990s, state and community leaders have instituted a range of legal, cultural, educational, and economic strategies to promote marriage, reduce divorce, and strengthen two-parent families. This report shows that, although the field of couples and marriage policy is new, quite a bit of activity is going on around the country—much more in some states than others. However, most of these couples and marriage initiatives remain modest in scale, using very limited funds and reaching small numbers of people.

Looking across the states, three current trends are worth noting:

**Increased attention to prevention.** The earliest efforts related to marriage promotion concentrated mostly on passing laws to make divorce more difficult and on making declarations that marriage is a public good. Public officials and community leaders are now focusing more on fostering preventive, educational services offered on a voluntary basis to help couples better choose marriage partners and create healthier, longer-lasting marriages. These latter initiatives have generally provoked less controversy, which may account for their growing popularity. In fact, these educational services are the only marriage strategy receiving any significant funding to date.

**Expanded efforts to reach low-income couples in a variety of settings.** Couples and marriage education classes have typically been offered to middle-class committed couples (engaged or already married) for a fee in free-standing, private or university-based programs or in faith-based institutions. In some states and communities, policymakers are now inte-

grating preventive, educational services to individuals and couples (both married and unmarried) in ongoing government-funded programs that serve predominantly low-income families from a variety of racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, as well as to other special populations. Relationship education programs are now being offered to high school students, disadvantaged expectant and new parents, low-income unwed parents, adoptive and foster parents, parents of juvenile first offenders, incarcerated parents and their partners, refugees, and military couples. This new focus reflects, in part, the influence of flexible TANF monies and new federal government grants.

**Limited focus to date on economic and other indirect strategies.** States have thus far explored only a limited range of strategies either to remove economic barriers to marriage or to provide economic incentives and support to encourage marriage and two-parent family formation. As interest in couples and marriage policy increases, states will likely want to minimize financial and programmatic barriers to marriage in TANF, Medicaid, housing, and other public assistance programs, and in tax policy, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit—especially if this can be done without penalizing single parents. Several government-funded studies are underway to better understand the interactive effects of different program rules on family types. One thing is already clear, however; reducing policy barriers to marriage is a complex and potentially expensive task.

As the discussion about marriage policy broadens, states are likely to seek more information about what kinds of income support, employment programs, and other kinds of economic assistance can help stabilize marriages and couple relationships. More attention may also be paid to reinforcing the positive indirect effects on marriage that have already been identified in such programs as child

support enforcement, nurse home-visiting, and teen pregnancy prevention.

Looking to the future, this report raises important questions for policymakers to consider as they pursue healthy marriage activities, including:

- ✱ Will public officials, community leaders, and program administrators have the will and the resources to do the important but time-consuming work of inviting potential critics and skeptics—including the domestic violence community—into their planning processes?
- ✱ As states seek to expand marriage programs to new populations, can existing approaches be successfully adapted to meet the needs of a more economically, racially, and culturally diverse group of participants?<sup>42</sup>
- ✱ Will policymakers and program administrators make services available to unmarried parents who may not decide to marry but who would like to do a better job co-parenting their children?
- ✱ Will enough attention be paid to building capacity—that is, orienting administrators to the new services, training trainers to deliver the workshops, and training front-line workers

to discuss these issues appropriately with clients and refer them to the new services?<sup>43</sup>

- ✱ Are public officials sufficiently committed to fund activities that are based on the best theory and research available and to carefully document how public funds are being spent? And will they have the patience to proceed cautiously in this arena until we learn more from research about what works and for whom?

The interest in couples and marriage policy is clearly growing. With or without targeted new federal funding, some states and communities are likely to expand their initiatives in this arena. Unfortunately, few of the programs and initiatives described in the report have been evaluated. The recent federal investment in research and evaluation of marriage programs is a step in the right direction. As this new field evolves over the next decade, it will be critically important to document both the positive and negative consequences of these programs and to learn whether and how policies and programs can strengthen marriage and two-parent families—and thereby improve child well-being.

## Endnotes

1. Parke, M. (2003, May). *Are married parents really better for children? What research says about the effects of family structure on child well-being*. Couples and Marriage Policy Brief No. 3. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
2. For example, more than 400 representatives from the Pacific Hub states attended a conference, “Working Together to Strengthen Families,” held in Seattle in August 2002, which was co-sponsored by the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Region X Office. In December 2002, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Governors Association co-sponsored a conference, “Strengthening Marriage and Two-Parent Families: State Policy Choices,” at the Johnson Foundation Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin. State governments also have co-sponsored conferences on marriage and healthy families in Florida, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and New Jersey. The ACF African American Healthy Marriage Initiative sponsored forums in 2003-2004 in Atlanta, Chicago, and Dallas.
3. See American Bar Association, Family Law Section, [www.abanet.org/family/faq.html](http://www.abanet.org/family/faq.html).
4. For background on the history of government involvement in marriage, see Cott, N.C. (2002). *Public vows: A history of marriage and the nation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Also see Ooms, T. (2001). The role of the federal government in strengthening marriage. *Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law*, 9(1). Available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).
5. See Parke, 2003.
6. For a review of how states have responded to the goal of reducing nonmarital child-bearing, see Nowak, M.W., Fishman, M.E., & Farrell, M.E. (2003, February). *State experiences and perspectives on reducing out-of-wedlock births. Final report*. Washington, DC: The Lewin Group. See also Orth, D.A., & Goggin, M.L. (2003, December). *How states and counties have responded to the family policy goals of welfare reform*. Albany, NY: Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government.
7. The “allowable” activities included public advertising campaigns on the value of marriage and skills needed to increase marital stability and health; education in high schools on the value of marriage, relationships skills, and budgeting; marriage education, marriage enhancement, and relationship skills programs for engaged couples, individuals interested in marriage, and non-married pregnant women and expectant fathers; marriage mentoring programs in at-risk communities; and programs to reduce disincentives to marriage in means-tested aid programs, if offered in conjunction with any of the other activities in the list.
8. Ooms, T. (2002). *Marriage and government: Strange bedfellows?* Couples and Marriage Policy Brief No. 1. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.
9. See Levin-Epstein, J., Ooms, T., Parke, M., Roberts, P., & Turetsky, V. (2002). *Spending too much, accomplishing too little: An analysis of the family formation provisions of H.R. 4737 and recommendations for change*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. Available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).
10. For more information, see Parke, M. (2003, June). *Marriage-related provisions in recent welfare reauthorization proposals: A summary*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. Available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).
11. To view the nine ACF priorities, visit: [www.acf.dhhs.gov/acf\\_about.html#priorities](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/acf_about.html#priorities).
12. Secretary Tommy G. Thompson quoted in Administration for Children and Families press release. (2003, May 9). *ACF approves child support demonstrations in Michigan and Idaho*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at [www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2003/release\\_050903.html](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/news/press/2003/release_050903.html).
13. In each site, the programs are working in collaboration with Catholic Charities, the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, and the Diocesan Office of Family Life Ministries. HIAS and USCCB have adapted four nationally known marriage education curricula to meet the special cultural needs of refugee families. These four curricula are the Practical Application of Intimate Relationships Skills (PAIRS), the Power of Two, the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), and the Family Wellness Program. For further information, contact Kimberly Haynes, Program Developer Strengthening Refugees and Marriages, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migrant Refugee Services, at [khaynes@uscbb.org](mailto:khaynes@uscbb.org), and Maria Teverovsky, Coordinator, Refugee Family Strengthening Program,

- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, maria.teverovsky@hias.org.
14. Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are matched savings accounts that help low-income individuals and families accumulate assets to buy a home, start a business, or obtain job training and education. See [www.ISED.org](http://www.ISED.org) and [www.idanetwork.org](http://www.idanetwork.org). In this project, ISED is partnering with five national organizations: the Alliance for Children and Families; the Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies; Catholic Charities, USA; Lutheran Services of America; and United Way of America. For further information, contact James Gatz, Office of Community Services, federal Administration for Children and Families, at 202-401-5284 or [jgatz@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:jgatz@acf.hhs.gov).
  15. For more information, see [www.acf.hhs.gov/key.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/key.html) or contact Bill Coffin, Special Assistant for Marriage Education, at [bcoffin@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:bcoffin@acf.hhs.gov)
  16. The initial idea for the Building Strong Families (BSF) project grew out of the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing longitudinal study conducted by the Center for Research on Child Wellbeing. See [http://crcw.princeton.edu/fragile\\_families](http://crcw.princeton.edu/fragile_families). See also Parke, M. (2004). *Who are "fragile families" and what do we know about them?* Couples and Marriage Policy Brief No.4. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. The BSF also builds on a previous Mathematica project designed to develop a conceptual model for interventions with fragile families at the time of the birth of their child. See Dion, M.R., et al. (2002, January). *Helping unwed parents build a strong and healthy marriages: A conceptual framework for interventions. Final report.* Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research Inc. Available at [www.mathematica-mpr.com](http://www.mathematica-mpr.com).
  17. For guidelines in assessing the potential merits or dangers of a particular marriage support or promotion strategy, see Ooms, T., & Parke, M. (2002, October). *More than a dating service? State activities designed to promote and strengthen marriage.* Couples and Marriage Policy Brief No. 2. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. Available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).
  18. In 1998, for example, child poverty rates in these states ranged from 26 percent in Louisiana (ranked 50th in the nation), 23 percent in Oklahoma and Arizona (tied for 41st), 22 percent in Florida (tied for 36th), 17 percent in Michigan (26th), and 13 percent in Utah (2nd). See Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2002). *Kids count data book: State profiles of child well-being.* Baltimore, MD: Author. In 1990, states with the highest divorce rates were Nevada (11.6 per 1,000 total population), Oklahoma (7.7), and Arizona and Arkansas (6.9). See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Undated). *Marriage and divorce rates by states: 1990, 1995, and 1999–2001.* Atlanta, GA: Author. Available at [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/99\\_01mardiv.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr50/99_01mardiv.pdf). However, state divorce data are very uneven in quality, and, since 1995, four states (California, Colorado, Indiana, and Louisiana) have not reported divorce data to the federal government. In addition, Texas did not report divorce data in 2001. As an example of how unreliable some state data can be, Oklahoma's divorce rate as reported to the federal government appeared to have dropped dramatically in 2000 and 2001; however, it turned out that the two largest counties had not reported their divorce data to the state that year. Eason, J. (2003, February). Public Strategies, Inc. Personal communication.
  19. See Kids Count Data Book 2002, endnote 18.
  20. In contrast, several states have tried to make it easier to marry by reducing waiting periods for marriage licenses and eliminating blood test requirements. See [http://www.law.cornell.edu/topics/Table\\_Marriage.htm](http://www.law.cornell.edu/topics/Table_Marriage.htm) for information on requirements for marriage.
  21. For more information on covenant marriages, go to [www.divorcereform.org/cov.html](http://www.divorcereform.org/cov.html). See also Spaht, K. (1998). Louisiana's covenant marriage: Social analysis and legal implications. *Louisiana Law Review*, 59, 63–130.
  22. For a national directory of the best known couples and marriage education programs, see [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com). Some organizations in the nonprofit, private, and faith-based sector—notably the Catholic Church—have been offering various types of premarital preparation for decades. See, for example, Center for Marriage and the Family. (1995). *Marriage preparation in the Catholic Church: Getting it right.* Omaha, NE: Creighton University.
  23. There are a few exceptions: the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), while originally developed for middle-income couples has also been adapted and widely used with low-income couples in the military, and the Family Wellness Program, based in Scotts Valley, CA, has been adapted and offered to many low-income

- Latinos and other ethnic and racial groups ([www.familywellness.com](http://www.familywellness.com)).
24. PREP, developed over 20 years by researchers at the University of Denver, has been widely used across the U.S., as well as in other countries. Evaluations of the PREP program have found small but promising results five years later, including improved couple communication and reduced divorce rates. See Halford, W.K., & Moore, E.N. (2002). Relationship education and the prevention of couple relationship problems. In A.S. Gurman & N.S. Jacobson (Eds.), *Clinical Handbook of Couple Therapy* (5th Edition). New York: Guilford Press. For a description of the curriculum and articles on the evaluations, see [www.prepinc.com](http://www.prepinc.com).
  25. Pearson, M. (2002). *Can kids get smart about marriage? A veteran teacher reviews some leading marriage and relationship education programs*. Piscataway, NJ: The National Marriage Project. Available at <http://marriage.rutgers.edu/publications/pubCanKids.htm>. For a directory of youth programs, see [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com).
  26. Reed, K. (2003, May 29). Personal communication. For more information about Connections, contact Kay Reed at the Dibble Fund, 800-695-7975 or [skills@dibblefund.org](mailto:skills@dibblefund.org).
  27. For example, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) has funded Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects in eight states: California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Washington, and Wisconsin. See Pearson, J., & Thoennes, N. (2000). *OCSE responsible fatherhood programs: Early implementation lessons*. Washington, DC: OCSE, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
  28. See Doherty, W.J., Kouneski, E.F., & Erickson, M. (1998, May). Responsible fathering: An overview and conceptual framework. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60, 277–292.
  29. These organizations are the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) in Gaithersburg, MD ([www.fatherhood.org](http://www.fatherhood.org)), the National Partnership for Community Leadership (NPCL) in Washington, DC ([www.npcl.org](http://www.npcl.org)), National Center for Fathering in Kansas City, MO ([www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com)), and the National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families in Washington, DC ([www.npnff.org](http://www.npnff.org)).
  30. Bloomstrom, G.L. (2002, March). Army building strong and ready families program. *NCFR Report*, 47(1), F11-F15; Bloomstrom, G. (2002, November 22 and 2003, May 16). Director, Ministry Initiatives Directorate. Personal communication. For more information, contact [bloomgl@occh-un.army.mil](mailto:bloomgl@occh-un.army.mil). For general information about marriage and family programs and policies in the military, see the Military Family Resource Center at [www.mfrc-dodqol.org](http://www.mfrc-dodqol.org), managed by Calibre Associates.
  31. Kobbe, A.M. (2002, November-December). Director, Family Consumer Science and Nutrition, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. Personal communication. For more information, contact [akobbe@reeusda.gov](mailto:akobbe@reeusda.gov).
  32. A similar effort was undertaken to create the National Extension Parent Education Model curriculum in 1994, which was distributed to every extension specialist and remains available on the web. For more information, contact H. Wallace Goddard, University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service at [Wgoddard@uaex.edu](mailto:Wgoddard@uaex.edu) or 501-671-2104. Also see Smith, C., Cudaback, D., Goddard, W., Myers-Walls, J. (1994). *National extension parent education model*. Manhattan, KS: Kansas Cooperative Extension Service. Available at [www.cyfernet.org/parenting\\_practices/preface.html](http://www.cyfernet.org/parenting_practices/preface.html).
  33. Established in the 1930s primarily for widows and their children, the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program eventually expanded to provide financial support to low-income, single-parent families of all types (widowed, separated and divorced, and never married).
  34. These requirements were (a) six or more quarters of work within 13 calendar quarters or (b) is qualified to receive unemployment compensation within the last year. State Policy Documentation Project: [www.spdp.org/tanf/categorical/categsumm.htm](http://www.spdp.org/tanf/categorical/categsumm.htm).
  35. Another reason for the small numbers of two-parent families participating in welfare programs is the prevailing belief in many low-income communities that only single parents can receive cash assistance. State welfare agencies have done very little public education or outreach to counter this belief.
  36. Unless otherwise noted in the state profiles, these eligibility rules are irrespective of whether the couple is legally married. The term “two-parent family” means a couple (whether married or cohabiting) with a child in common where paternity has been legally established.

37. Falk, G., & Tauber, J. (2001). Welfare reform: TANF provisions related to marriage and two-parent families. *CRS Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
38. Storrs, M. (2003, January 10). Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Personal communication. Technically “separate state programs” means one in which the state expenditures are claimed to meet the “maintenance of effort” (MOE) requirement.
39. Savner, S., & Greenberg, M. (1997). *The new framework: Alternative state funding choices under TANF*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy. Available at [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).
40. Stephanie Saroki points out that there are a variety of minor ways in which state rules and practices can vary with respect to how generously they treat two-parent families. For example, states can choose how much income and assets to disregard when determining the income eligibility. Thus, a state like California, which has a very generous earned income disregard, treats two-parent families with two wage earners more favorably than a state that has a small income disregard. In determining benefit amounts, states also choose whether to provide more assistance to an adult than to a child. In some states, for instance, the monthly benefit is higher for a two-parent, two-child family than for a one-parent, three-child family—because it is assumed that an adult costs more than a child. Finally, the frequency with which states require welfare recipients to report changes in income may vary. For example, if reporting is required only every six months, this may have the effect of disregarding a new spouse’s income for six months. See Saroki, S. (2003, April 1). *Marriage policy and welfare reform: Recommendations for structuring a “marriage-neutral” TANF program*. *Policy Analysis Exercise*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government. Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Public Policy.
41. The term used in the Vermont statute is “re-united”—it makes no specific reference to marriage.
42. Ooms, T., & Wilson, P. (forthcoming). The challenges of offering relationship and marriage education to low-income couples. *Family Relations*, special issue on innovations in marriage education, edited by Jeffrey Larkin.
43. This has been one of the major lessons of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. See Myrick, M., & Ooms, T. (2002). *What if a governor decided to address the M-word? The use of research in the design and implementation of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative*. Paper presented at the American Association of Public Policy and Management annual conference in Dallas, November 7, 2002. Available from [tooms@clasp.org](mailto:tooms@clasp.org).



# Part Two

## State-by-State Profiles

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*Note: Appendix III is a list of Key Contacts in Seven High-Activity States, defined as states in which the authors identified a good deal of funded activity related to strengthening marriage (denoted with asterisks in the profiles). For the other states, whenever possible, we have included contact information about particular programs or activities in the endnotes.*

### Alabama

#### Programs, Activities, and Services

##### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In January 2003, the Alabama Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board was awarded a \$200,000 “Special Improvement Grant” from the Office of Child Support Enforcement, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The grant is being used to fund four pilot programs targeting new, low-income parents who are romantically involved but not married. Building upon the findings on new, unmarried parents from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study,<sup>1</sup> the programs provide employment services and relationships skills classes and promote marriage using a curriculum called “Caring for My Family.” The programs also seek to increase paternity establishment and child support payments. Program staff receive training on domestic violence. Sites may deliver the program to the parent couples either in a group format or in individual home visits.<sup>2</sup>

##### *State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services*

The Healthy Couples, Healthy Children project is a coordinated state effort to offer and evaluate marriage education programs in Alabama. Funding is provided by the state Children’s Trust Fund to the Cooperative Extension Service at Auburn University. Extension Family Life specialists in five pilot counties (Elmore, Escambia, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, and Walker) will coordinate Community Councils of interested local professionals from the public and private sectors and from faith-based organizations. Ten key community professionals in each of the five pilot counties will be trained in two marriage preparation curricula: (1) the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), used primarily for couples about to marry or couples already in their first marriage, and (2) The Smart Steps for Remarriages program, a recently designed program offered to couples for whom the current marriage is remarriage for at least one of the partners. The University Extension Service is planning an evaluation of the program.<sup>3</sup>

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Current eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Alabama established a separate state two-parent program.

Marriage Incentive: Disregards the earned income of a new or reconciling spouse for three months.

## Alaska

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

The Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program is offered to couples at Fort Wainwright, near Fairbanks, and Fort Richardson, near Anchorage. It offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Current eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.<sup>4</sup>

## Arizona\*

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

#### *Legislative Marriage Initiative*

In April 2000, the legislature passed a law that established the Marriage and Communication Skills Program, funded with \$1.15 million set aside from Arizona’s TANF block grant. The program established a Community-Based Marriage and Communication Skills Program Fund and a nine-member Marriage and Communication Skills Commission. The Commission provides oversight to the Department of Economic Security in awarding TANF funds for the marriage skills training programs and in the creation and dissemination of a marriage handbook. These activities are described in more detail below.

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

#### *Covenant Law*

The Arizona Covenant Marriage Law, passed in 1998, requires couples who enter into a covenant marriage to submit a statutorily prescribed written statement and sign an affidavit that they have received premarital counseling from a member of the clergy or from a marriage counselor. The law requires that this premarital counseling include discussion of the meaning of covenant marriage, of the obligation to seek counseling in times of marital difficulties, and of grounds required for legally terminating a covenant marriage. These grounds include adultery, conviction for a felony or imprisonment, abandonment by one spouse for at least a year, physical or sexual abuse (of the spouse or a child), domestic violence or emotional abuse, separation for

at least two years, and habitual alcohol or drug abuse. Couples may also reach agreement to divorce.<sup>5</sup>

## Programs, Activities, and Services

### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*<sup>6</sup>

The law that created the Marriage and Communication Skills Program allows TANF funds to be spent on the following marriage support and education activities:

- ✦ \$1 million for contracts competitively awarded to community-based organizations to offer courses and workshops to couples on marriage education, communication skills, and domestic violence. The workshops are voluntary and participants pay a small portion of the cost. In 2001-2002, 11 organizations were awarded contracts. In January 2003, four of the current contractors received additional funding, and additional contracts were awarded to contractors located in “underserved areas” of the state. These contracts were revised to permit attendance by individuals as well as couples. There is no formal evaluation of this program, but participants are asked to fill out customer satisfaction surveys.
- ✦ \$75,000 for vouchers that pay the entire cost of the workshops for families with incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- ✦ \$75,000 to develop and distribute a free State of Arizona Marriage Handbook to all marriage license applicants. The Marriage Handbook, which is available in English and Spanish, is distributed by the County Superior Court Clerks. It includes a list of the organizations awarded contracts for workshops and information about how to apply for the vouchers.

In 2002 and 2003, Catholic Social Services in Phoenix received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In 2002, Arizona was awarded a demonstration grant of \$99,596, from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement under the child support section 1115 waiver program, to increase child support collection from low-income, non-custodial parents. This grant has been awarded to a coalition of fatherhood program providers primarily in Maricopa and Pima Counties, which includes government, community, and faith-based organizations. The federal grant has been supplemented with state dollars for a total of \$343,434. The program will cover a range of topics, including services and education about job readiness, employment and child support, couples and family relationships, parenting skills, domestic violence, and the benefits of marriage. The Lewin Group is conducting a program evaluation.<sup>7</sup>

### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families Program to couples in Fort Huachuca, near Tucson, when the national program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health

assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Arizona has removed the “100-hour rule,” but retains special work history requirements for two-parent families.<sup>8</sup>

## Arkansas

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

#### *Governor’s Conference on the Family*

Governor Mike Huckabee (R) convened a Governor’s Conference in 1999 in response to what he declared a “marital emergency” in the state. He called for a 50 percent reduction in divorce in Arkansas and encouraged community leaders to form community marriage policy initiatives.<sup>9</sup>

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

#### *Covenant Law*

In 2001, legislation was passed that created an option for Arkansas couples to choose a covenant marriage contract. When a couple enters into a covenant marriage, they must agree to receive authorized counseling emphasizing the purposes and responsibilities of marriage. They are also legally bound by two limitations not applicable to other couples who marry in Arkansas: (1) they consent to obtaining marital counseling if problems develop while they are married, and (2) they can only seek a divorce or legal separation for limited reasons, including adultery, felony, physical or sexual abuse of spouse or a child, living apart for two years, “habitual drunkenness, cruel and barbarous and dangerous behavior, or behavior that imposes intolerable indignities.”<sup>10</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is now based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## California

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In October 2003, the Orange County Department of Social Services received a three-year, \$200,000-per-year demonstration grant from the federal Children’s Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families. The primary goal of this grant is to strengthen the relationship of parents who are being served by the child welfare agency. A nationally known skills-building program, Relationships Enhancement (RE),<sup>11</sup> will be provided to at least 1,200 couples in seven of the family resource centers. It will be offered in both English and Spanish and offered free or at low cost. The project will build community capacity to deliver the program through a “Train the

Trainer” effort offered to community-based and faith-based organizations. A quasi-experimental evaluation design has been proposed.<sup>12</sup>

In 2002 and 2003, the Jewish Family Service of San Diego received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience. In 2003, Catholic Charities of the East Bay (Oakland) received Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to conduct a similar range of program activities.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility:** California has removed the special work history requirements for two-parent families, but the “100-hour rule” is still in effect. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

**Marriage Incentives:** The Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Consortium operates a tribal TANF program in Riverside and Los Angeles counties. The Consortium has developed a marriage promotion program in which Native American TANF recipients who marry are given a lump sum (\$1,500) towards the costs of a Native American traditional wedding ceremony. Once married, they are given a one-time \$2,000 marriage bonus. (In addition, the marriage promotion program offers workshops on such topics as “Pathways to Healthy Relationships” for both married and unmarried couples.)<sup>13</sup>

## Colorado

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

In 2000, the Office of Governor Bill Owen (R) began exploring a range of initiatives designed to strengthen marriage within the broader context of strengthening families. In September 2002, the Governor, in collaboration with the state Department of Human Services and federal Administration for Children and Families Region VIII officials, held a two-day policy conference, Strengthening Families, which addressed, among other topics, marriage, two-parent families, and fatherhood, especially in low-income populations. Around 300 participants representing more than 30 government, community-based, and faith-based organizations attended.<sup>14</sup>

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In October 2003, the Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver received a five-year, child welfare training grant from the federal Children’s Bureau (\$200,000 for the first year). The project is a collaboration between the school, the Learning Systems Group in Washington, DC, Dr. Howard Markman, University of Denver (co-founder of the PREP program), and child welfare officials in Colorado, Wyoming,

and Kansas. The goal is to develop, test, implement, evaluate, and disseminate a competency-based training program to enhance child welfare worker, supervisor, and administrative capacity to strengthen marital and parenting relationships of the families they serve. In addition, the project aims to identify systemic barriers to transferring this training into practice. The project intends to train 300 frontline child welfare workers, supervisors, and administrators across Colorado, Wyoming, and Kansas.<sup>15</sup>

In September 2003, the Denver Indian Family Resource Center received a three-year grant (\$100,000 per year) from the federal Administration for Native Americans (ANA) to develop a curriculum designed for an urban Native American community designed to teach healthy relationships skills across the lifespan. The grant also contains a component designed to increase Native American fathers' involvement with their children.<sup>16</sup>

In 2002 and 2003, the Jewish Family Service of Denver received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement Funds through the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### ***TANF***

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed "100-hour rule" and work history requirements. Eligibility is now based solely on financial circumstances.

## **Connecticut**

### **Programs, Activities, and Services**

#### ***Couples and Marriage Education for Adults***

In 2003, the Catholic Migration and Refugee Services in Hartford received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### ***TANF***

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed "100-hour rule" and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## Delaware

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Multi-Sector Community Marriage Initiatives*

In 2003, the Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families, Inc., Wilmington, received a \$40,000 grant from the federal Office of Community Services, Block Grant Training and Technical Assistance Program. The purpose of the grant is to use the capacities of faith communities and other social welfare education, advocacy, and service organizations to promote healthy marriage among low-income Delawareans. The funded activities include coalition-building and community education and leadership designed to assess the availability of current services and supports available to form and sustain healthy marriages and to identify gaps in services and recommendations on how to fill those gaps.<sup>17</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## District of Columbia

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2002, the D.C. Administration of Human Services, Income Maintenance Division, awarded Abundantly Living Services, a minority-owned counseling/consultant firm, a pilot contract of \$40,000 to strengthen marriages among low-income couples. The contract called for training local ministers in the use of pre-marital inventories (or questionnaires) with engaged couples and for training ministers and staff to deliver one-day workshops in relationships skills for low-income couples.<sup>18</sup> The monies were also spent on paid radio spots advertising the availability of the workshops. According to the program director, one of the lessons learned in this pilot program was that these services need to be made available to single people, many of whom are in serious relationships.

## Florida\*

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

#### *Florida Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act of 1998*

In 1998, Governor Lawton Chiles (D) signed the Florida Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act, making Florida the first state to require marriage skills education as a part of its high school curriculum. The law states that “the family is the foundation of society,” and that “the marital relationship is the foundation of the family and that consequently, strengthening marriages will lead to stronger families, children, and communities, as well as a stronger economy.” The Act mandates several marriage preparation and support activities (described on the following pages). However, no

funds were set aside to implement this law—apart from a grant to Florida State University for curricula review and development, research, and evaluation.

### *Strengthening Families and Marriage Initiative, 2003*

Governor Jeb Bush (R) declared in his January 2003 State of the State message that he planned to make strengthening families one of his Administration's top priorities. He stated that strong marriages, families, and communities are the foundation on which our society is built.<sup>19</sup>

In May 2003, the state legislature enacted a law (SB 480) repealing a Fatherhood Commission and creating a Commission on Marriage and Family Support, which was set up in July 2003. It also confirmed Jerry Regier as the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families. Regier had previously led the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (see p. 49). Commission members are appointed by the Governor and the legislature, and the Commission is administered by the Ounce of Prevention Fund, a public/private partnership. Although it functions independently, the Commission works closely with the Florida Department of Children and Families and other agencies.

The legislation spelled out several tasks for the Commission: functioning as a clearinghouse and resource center, developing public education and awareness materials, and preparing three reports in its first year on (1) programs, resources, and strategies that exist in Florida for supporting safe, violence-free, and nurturing parenting; (2) programs that teach relationships skills for different types of couples, including divorcing parents; and (3) promising practices being tried in other parts of the country. The Marriage and Family Support Commission is expected to continue to focus on some activities promoting responsible fatherhood (see pp. 31–32).

State officials contracted with the University of Florida to conduct a state baseline survey of attitudes, beliefs, and demographics related to marriage and family formation, which was modeled on a survey conducted by the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. The survey report was published in December 2003.<sup>20</sup>

## **Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law**

### *Marriage License Fee Reduction*

The 1998 Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act reduced marriage license fees by \$32.50 for couples who present valid certificates of completion of at least four hours of instruction at a qualified, registered premarital preparation course provider. Couples who do not choose to take a course must wait three days after they receive their marriage license before they can marry.

## **Programs, Activities, and Services**

### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

The 1998 Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act mandates the following:

- \* All couples applying for marriage licenses must sign a statement saying they have read a handbook prepared by the Florida Bar Association informing them of their rights and responsibilities during marriage and upon dissolution of marriage.
- \* The premarital preparation courses approved for the reduced marriage license fee may include instruction regarding: (a) conflict management, (b) communication skills, (c) financial responsibilities, and (d) children and parenting responsibilities.



To be on the approved list of courses, teachers must register with the county clerks and send their curricula to the Florida State University Center for Marriage and Family, which reviews the course curricula “to determine their efficacy.” The law also awarded the Center a grant to conduct related research and evaluation and develop a standard curriculum, which would eventually be offered across the state to assure some uniformity. The curriculum the Center developed, *Building a Strong Marital House*, which draws upon marital research by John Gottman of the University of Washington, is being offered as a pilot to couples in Leon County at no cost. The Center is planning to train other professionals in this curriculum so that it can be offered more widely across the state.<sup>21</sup>

- ✦ Couples with children who file for divorce may be required by the judge to take a Parent Education and Family Stabilization course.

In October 2003, the Department of Children and Families received three, three-year, \$200,000-per-year demonstration grants from the federal Children’s Bureau. The grants will go to three organizations that will train educators in providing relationships skills and marriage strengthening programs to couples and families primarily in the child welfare system. The organizations will also conduct research.<sup>22</sup> The three funded organizations are:

- ✦ The new Florida Marriage and Family Research Institute is based at the Academy for Teaching, Learning, and Leadership, University of Central Florida. The project will provide research and training for public and private agency staff and faith-based community organizations providing services to couples and families.
- ✦ Big Bend Community-Based Care serves eight counties in the northwestern area of the state. This project will base its service interventions on the research and curriculum of John Gottman, University of Washington.<sup>23</sup>
- ✦ PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationships Skills) will conduct the project in collaboration with the National Partnership for Community Leadership (NPCL) and the help of a community advisory board. Drawing upon the experience of the PAIRS program,<sup>24</sup> this project will build capacity of local child welfare agency staff to work with mothers, fathers, and the parents as a couple.

### *Relationships and Marriage Education for High School Students*

The 1998 Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act requires all Florida students to complete a one-half credit in life management skills, which must include marriage and relationship skill-based education, in order to graduate from high school. Different curricula are being used in different counties and schools. In the Tallahassee area, the course is *Partners for Peers*, based on the Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills (PAIRS) curriculum, adapted for high schools under the sponsorship of the Family Law Division of the American Bar Association.<sup>25</sup>

### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In 1996, Governor Chiles and the legislature created the Florida Commission on Responsible Fatherhood, which promoted responsible and healthy fathering among all fathers—whether married, separated, divorced, or never married. Administered by the Ounce of Prevention Fund, the Commission received significant funding (over \$1 million annually) from three state government agencies: the Department of Children and Families for administrative costs, the Department of Health for fatherhood programs, and the Agency for Workforce Innovations for job placement and parent education programs. Beginning in 1997, the Commission funded approximately 30 fatherhood

programs and provided information and public education on fatherhood. The Commission also worked closely with representatives of the domestic violence community to raise awareness of and prevent family violence and abuse.

In June 1997, the Commission published a report, *Policy Regarding Marriage and the Wellbeing of Children*, which argued that public policy that promotes long-lasting marriage is consistent with the goal of promoting responsible fatherhood. The Commission report recommended several strategies to strengthen marriages and reduce father-absent families, including creating pro-marriage education, premarital preparation, and mentoring programs; encouraging statewide adoption of Community Marriage Policies (see Appendix I, p. 67); implementing a public service campaign to educate the public about the benefits of marriage and the damages of divorce; enacting further legislation to strengthen the Florida Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act; encouraging shared domestic responsibility between husbands and wives; and using surplus TANF funds for pilot programs to reduce hostility in divorce proceedings.

As of July 1, 2003, the Fatherhood Commission was discontinued, but some of its activities are expected to be continued by the new Commission on Marriage and Family Support.

#### *State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services*

Family life extension agents offer premarital education classes on a quarterly basis in 10 counties and intermittently in other parts of the state. These classes use the *Before You Tie the Knot Curriculum* developed by educators in the Florida extension service.<sup>26</sup>

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### *TANF*

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility:** Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## **Georgia**

### **Programs, Activities, and Services**

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2002 and 2003, the Jewish Family and Community Service of Atlanta received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program is designed to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Georgia has abolished the “100-hour rule” but has retained the special work history requirements for two-parent families.<sup>27</sup> Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## Hawaii

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

The Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families (BSRF) program has been offered to couples in five brigades at Schofield Barracks, near Wahiwa, as part of a pilot program. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends. This program will be continued when the BSRF program is expanded.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## Idaho

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In May 2003, the city of Nampa, in partnership with the Healthy Families-Nampa Coalition, received a \$544,000 federal child support demonstration grant (under 1115 waiver authority) to promote healthy marriages and parental relationships. The coalition is a group of religious, civic, education, minority, media, and business leaders—including the director of a local domestic violence center—focused on supporting healthy marriages. The federal funding for this project is a supplement to the federal support the state currently receives for providing child support services. Participating churches and community partners will contribute \$1 in matching resources for every \$2 in federal money, and the city of Nampa will administer the grant.

The grant is to be used over a five-year period to deliver faith-based and community initiatives in support of healthy marriages and responsible parenting, including premarital instruction; parenting classes; marriage and family enrichment; couple mentoring; and counseling for unwed, expectant mothers and couples, couples in crisis, and children impacted by adverse family circumstances. There will also be a focus on helping fathers, including prison inmates, develop good fathering skills. According to the grant proposal, these activities and services will seek to improve the enforcement of child support obligations, increase cooperation in establishing paternity, and decrease

divorce rates, thereby leading to a decline in the number of child support cases. The federal government will be conducting an evaluation of the project outcomes.<sup>28</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Illinois

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2002 and 2003, the Family Ministries Office of the Archdiocese of Chicago received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience. In 2002, the Jewish Family and Community Services received a federal Administration for Children and Families grant from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society to conduct a pilot program with similar goals and activities.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Illinois set up a separate state program for two-parent families in 2001 and 2002.

## Indiana

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2003, Catholic Social Services in Indianapolis received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: The “100-hour rule” applies to new two-parent applicants only. If a current single-parent TANF recipient decides to marry or cohabit, the

100-hour rule is waived and future benefits are based solely on financial circumstances.<sup>29</sup> Established separate state two-parent family program.

## Iowa

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

In 2003, the legislature appropriated approximately \$75,000 to conduct Marriage Forums (focus groups) around the state to determine what local communities might want and expect from a state-operated marriage initiative.<sup>30</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Kansas

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program to couples in Fort Riley, near Junction City, when the program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Kentucky

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In October 2003, the University of Louisville received a five-year grant from the federal Children’s Bureau (\$161,064 for the first year). The goal of this project is to develop a competency-based training curriculum in healthy marriage and family formation specific to child welfare in order to strengthen marriage and families and thereby prevent or reduce child maltreatment. The curriculum will be developed in partnership with the local child welfare agency, faith-based organizations, and other community organizations. The project will provide training to 50 community child welfare teams and managers and to faith-based organizations.<sup>31</sup>

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program to couples in Fort Campbell, near Clarksville, when the national program is ex-

panded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility:** The “100-hour rule” is only used to determine the initial eligibility of a new TANF family. Once the family is deemed eligible, the rule no longer applies.

## Louisiana\*

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

#### *National Marriage Day*

In 1999, February 14 was proclaimed “National Marriage Day” by then-Governor Mike Foster (R).

#### *Governor’s Commission on Marriage and Family*

In 2000, the state legislature approved a resolution recommending that the Governor develop a “council on marriage” charged with developing, monitoring, and evaluating marriage programs, policies, public education, and curricula to make sure that the state is in no way discouraging or undermining marriage.<sup>33</sup> In response, Governor Foster established the Governor’s Commission on Marriage and Family in March 2001. The Commission is charged with examining ways to promote marriage and remove disincentives to marriage created by law or public policy, particularly among populations with low marriage rates.<sup>34</sup>

#### *Healthy Marriages and Strong Families Initiative Legislation*

In 2002–2003, the state legislature approved a total of approximately \$1,375,000 in TANF funds to be spent by the Department of Social Services on a series of “family strengthening initiatives...designed to enable low-income parents to act in the best interest of their child.” Its components are described below.

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

#### *Covenant Law*

In August 1997, Louisiana enacted the first Covenant Marriage Act in the nation. The law requires couples applying for a marriage license to be given a choice between the regular marriage contract and a covenant marriage contract, under which couples express their intent to remain married for life. Couples who opt for a covenant marriage agree to receive premarital counseling from a member of the clergy or marriage counselor and to seek marital counseling before applying for a divorce. The grounds for divorce include adultery, conviction for a felony, one year of abandonment, physical or sexual abuse of the spouse or a child, and separation for at least two years. (The state’s no-fault divorce statute requires a 180-day wait before filing for a divorce.) An independent study of the implementation and effects of the Covenant Marriage Act is underway, and some preliminary results have already been published.<sup>35</sup>

## Programs, Activities, and Services

### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

Since September 2002, as part of the new Healthy Marriage and Strengthening Families Initiative, the state Department of Social Services, Office of Family Support, has used approximately \$1.375 million in TANF funds for contracts with outside vendors to develop a series of products and services primarily for low-income, unmarried couples (“fragile families”).

### *Fatherhood, Co-Parenting, and Marriage*

The following activities were funded under the Healthy Marriage and Strengthening Families Initiative:

- ✦ A handbook for unmarried, low-income parents, emphasizing the importance of co-parenting and the value of marriage, to be distributed in prenatal care clinics and birthing hospitals and by public assistance and nonprofit staff.
- ✦ A marriage handbook for newlyweds, engaged couples, and individuals interested in marriage to be distributed by pastors, counselors, and marriage license clerks and in other settings.
- ✦ A curriculum for low-income fathers, low-income mothers, and unwed couples that will focus on building strong families and what it means to have a healthy marriage and healthy relationship. The curriculum will be pilot-tested. The state plans to develop a certification process and to begin training staff to use the curriculum in 2004.
- ✦ A 10- to 20-minute video complementing the handbooks and curriculum that will serve as an outreach/educational tool for community- and faith-based social service organizations.
- ✦ Preparation of a series of brief “clips,” based on the video, to be distributed as television and radio public service announcements.
- ✦ A survey of low-income, unmarried new parents in Louisiana, based in part on the national Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Survey. The survey asks about attitudes and perceived myths with regard to relationships and marriage. (The survey was funded by an additional state appropriation of \$505,000 in 2002.)<sup>36</sup>
- ✦ A demonstration program focused on strengthening the relationships skills of low-income parents. In two demonstration sites, community-based organizations were funded to provide relationships skills training and education to low-income married and unmarried couples.
- ✦ In 2002, the legislature appropriated \$3 million for several parenting initiatives focused on helping non-custodial fathers be more responsible and effective fathers. In 2003, an additional \$750,000 was appropriated to develop a statewide fatherhood demonstration program similar to the national Parents Fair Share program. Several of these projects emphasize promoting and facilitating strong co-parenting relationships.

In October 2003, the Department of Social Services received a three-year demonstration grant from the federal Children’s Bureau (\$200,000 annually). The project will train staff of Family Resource Centers to add a healthy marriage/strengthening relationship component to the services they offer “fragile” families. The training will build on the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) curriculum, supplemented with other tools and materials. The project evaluation will compare the effects of using different modes of service delivery and curriculum components.<sup>37</sup>

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Maine

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2003, Catholic Charities Maine in Portland received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Applicant families have the option of including or excluding the income of step-parents when determining TANF eligibility.<sup>38</sup>

## Maryland

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

#### *Marriage License Fee Reduction*

In May 2001, Governor Parris Glendening (D) signed a law allowing any county in Maryland to discount marriage license fees for couples who complete premarital preparation courses. The course must be at least four hours in length and include instruction in conflict management, communication skills, and financial and parental responsibilities. The course must be offered by certain categories of qualified providers, as defined in the law.

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In 2001, the Maryland Welfare Innovation Act created a Commission on Responsible Fatherhood. The Commission was charged with educating citizens about the problems children face when raised without a responsible father, with identifying barriers to responsible fatherhood and proposing strategies to overcome them, and with coordinating programs within the state. A variety of fatherhood initiatives and programs in various sites throughout the state are supported and guided by the Commission and funded by government and private foundation sources.<sup>39</sup>

One of these programs is the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development (CFWD) in Baltimore, which is one of the federally funded Partnership for Fragile Families sites. Under a grant from the Ford Foundation, CFWD has developed a



co-parenting curriculum called “50-50” Parenting, designed for low-income, never-married couples. In 2002, CFWD received a contract from the Louisiana Department of Social Services to develop a marriage and healthy relationships curriculum for fragile families, to be used in Baltimore and programs in Louisiana. This curriculum for low-income fathers explores the knowledge, expectations, and attitudes about marriage and discusses the benefits of healthy marriage for children. The curriculum also offers relationships skills training to those fathers and mothers in committed relationships.<sup>40</sup>

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

### *Child Support*

Since 2000, the Maryland Office of Child Support has been conducting a debt-leveraging pilot demonstration program in Baltimore City. Non-custodial fathers who have accumulated burdensome child support arrears (while unemployed or in jail, for instance) may enter into an agreement with the child support office whereby their debt will be gradually reduced on a monthly basis if they regularly attend a responsible fatherhood program and pay their current support obligations. While the reduction of this debt is not conditional upon the parents reuniting or marrying, one of the aims of this program is to improve mother-father relationships, as well as to promote involvement of non-custodial fathers with their children.<sup>41</sup>

## Massachusetts

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In 1997, the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and Family Support was created by executive order. In a statement of guiding principles, it defined a responsible father as, among other things, one who “sustains a strong and vital marriage . . . and if not married, establishes legal paternity . . . and actively shares with the child’s mother in the continuing emotional, physical and financial care of their child.” In its first year-end report, the Commission made several recommendations, including “recognizing and promoting the importance of caring, committed, collaborative and long-lasting marriages” and helping non-married parents co-parent better.<sup>42</sup> The Commission’s work inspired a number of initiatives, including the Father Friendly Initiative, operated under the Boston Healthy Start initiative, a site in the Partners for Fragile Families Project.

The Fatherhood Initiative, based in the state Office of Child Support, is working in three communities—Worcester, Boston, and Brockton—to develop fatherhood peer support groups and referral networks for pre-marital and other kinds of marriage education and support services.<sup>43</sup>

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule.” Retained the special work history requirements.<sup>44</sup>

## Michigan\*

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In July 2001, the Michigan Family Independence Agency (FIA) launched a five-site pilot demonstration project, Encouraging Family Formation (EFF), with \$250,000 in TANF funding for FY 2002. The five pilot counties were Wayne, Genesee, Berrien, Kent, and Charlevoix/Emmet. The projects were funded with a combination of federal, state, and county monies. In FY 2003, only the Wayne County and Kent County sites received continued funding due to budget cuts.

In these pilot programs, county-level providers offered a six-week series of classes to all custodial parents (mostly single mothers) receiving cash assistance. Recipients were encouraged to attend these classes when their babies were between 7–12 weeks of age (that is, before the mothers were subject to TANF work requirements). Most sites offered various incentives (e.g., gifts) to participants to complete the program. Other mothers in the community could also participate upon request. On-site child care was provided, and the mothers were encouraged to bring the fathers of their babies to the classes. The five pilot sites were encouraged to use a new curriculum, *Caring for My Family: Family Formation and Fatherhood Curriculum*, specially developed by the cooperative extension service at Michigan State University. The classes typically focused on parenting skills and appropriate discipline, communication skills, stress and anger management, joint decision-making and problem-solving, benefits of marriage, health issues, choosing a day care provider, and family planning, among other issues. Each site provided information about domestic violence and healthy relationships. The Kent County site made particularly strong efforts to increase the participation of fathers. The initial plan to evaluate these pilot programs was dropped as a result of state budget cuts.<sup>45</sup>

In 2003, Catholic Human Development Outreach in Grand Rapids received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

#### *Fatherhood, Co-Parenting, and Marriage*

In May 2003, the state of Michigan was awarded \$990,000 from the federal government for a five-year child support demonstration program (under a 1115 waiver) to improve the establishment of paternity, increase child support, and improve the relationships of fathers with their children and the mothers of their children. The project

focuses particularly on low-income communities. It also includes efforts to reduce the potential for domestic violence.

The grant is awarded to three collaborating organizations in West Michigan—Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids serving as the lead agency in partnership with City Vision and West Christian Foundation. Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids is described below. City Vision is a collaboration of 10 established “Institutions of Trust” (i.e., grassroots/neighborhood organizations) that provide a variety of services (including jobs, food pantries, etc.) in the low-income communities of Grand Rapids. The West Michigan Christian Foundation is raising the required matching dollars from the private sector. This project also works with the Kent County Family Independence Agency, Head Start, and other public agencies that serve low-income families. The grant does not affect the amount of child support funding the state receives from the federal government.

The specific objectives of the demonstration program, Healthy Marriages, Healthy Relationships, are to increase effective co-parenting skills among married and non-married parents, to increase the participation by non-custodial fathers in the lives of their children, to increase the number of couples who participate in marriage preparation, and to decrease the divorce rate among low-income couples. The curricula and services used will be customized to meet the needs of different urban populations.<sup>46</sup> The program will be evaluated by an external organization under contract with the federal Administration for Children and Families, as well as with the cooperative efforts of the Calvin College Social Research Center.

### *Multi-Sector Community Marriage Initiatives*

Healthy Marriages Grand Rapids (HMGR) is a multi-sector initiative formed in 1997 to support healthy, life-long marriage “as a worthy personal goal, as well as the ideal context within which to conceive and rear children.”<sup>47</sup> The program is housed at the Pine Rest Family Institute, a unit within a comprehensive private community mental health center that coordinates the wide range of participating community partners. The marriage initiative has been funded by private foundations, corporations, and individual donors.

HMGR established three long-range goals: to reduce the divorce rate and out-of-wedlock birth rate by 25 percent in Kent County (the home of Grand Rapids) within 10 years and to increase the percentage of churches that offer premarital education to 75 percent. HMGR has emphasized the involvement of religious and business leaders, health care and social service professionals, judges, and other community leaders. Since 1997, the initiative has:

- ✦ Launched a community awareness campaign about the HMGR initiative.
- ✦ Formed five task forces defined by profession: faith-based organizations, business leaders, health and social service professionals, judges, and African American pastors.
- ✦ Publicized a “Menu for a Successful Marriage” on area billboards and in full-page newspaper advertisements.
- ✦ Published a brochure, *Marriage and Family-Friendly Businesses*, which provides strategies to become a marriage- and family-friendly employer and highlights local businesses that have family-friendly policies. The brochure is distributed to CEOs and human resource directors in the community.

- ✱ Conducted research on state and county statistics on marriage, divorce, and births to unmarried mothers; held focus groups with TANF clients; reviewed open divorce records; and surveyed family-friendly employer policies in the Greater Grand Rapids Community. These studies, conducted in collaboration with the Social Research Center at Calvin College, have helped to identify high-risk populations and develop strategically designed programs and services.
- ✱ Provided regular premarital education and marriage enrichment classes for couples in Greater Grand Rapids and held marriage enrichment events and weekends for African American couples.
- ✱ Provided training on several of the leading marriage and relationships skills curricula for counselors, clergy, and lay leaders.
- ✱ Piloted a “condensed” premarital education program offered on-site in the courthouse, which is required for all couples wishing to be married in a civil ceremony by the judge who performed the most marriage ceremonies in the county.
- ✱ Participated as a partner in one of the state’s five-site demonstration programs for TANF families, Encouraging Family Formation (described above).

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Minnesota

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

#### *Marriage License Fee Reduction*

In 2001, Minnesota enacted a law that reduced the marriage license fee from \$70 to \$20 for couples who agree to attend a 12-hour premarital education course. The course must include a premarital inventory component and teach communication and conflict management skills and be offered by a licensed or ordained minister or licensed marriage and family therapist.

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2002 and 2003, Catholic Charities in St. Paul received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established separate state program for two-parent families in 2002.

## Mississippi

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In October 2000, the state Division of Community Services launched a Responsible Fatherhood Initiative with \$4.5 million in TANF funding in FY 2002 and \$1.6 million in FY 2003. The family formation goals of TANF are addressed in the fatherhood training programs, including encouraging two-parent families and promoting marriage. The agency funds nonprofit organizations, including community action agencies, to conduct 15 responsible fatherhood programs. The programs provide services to address barriers to responsible father involvement, including job assistance, education, and transportation. In addition, these programs offer a curriculum developed by the National Center for Fathering, “Secrets of Effective Fathering,” which teaches team-parenting skills and plans to incorporate a focus on healthy marriages.<sup>48</sup>

### Policy Changes Related in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF<sup>49</sup>*

Two-Parent Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

Marriage Incentive: Disregards the income of a newly married biological or step-parent in determining a household’s eligibility for welfare for the first six months after the couple marries.

## Missouri

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In October 2003, the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology in Springfield received a five-year child welfare training grant from the federal Children’s Bureau (first-year funding level is \$187,099). The Forest Institute, in partnership with Southwest Missouri State University and the Southern Region of the Missouri Division of Family Services, will develop, implement, and institutionalize a competency-based curriculum to train child welfare staff to provide effective family formation services to their low-income clients residing in eight Ozark counties. The initial phase of the training will focus on child abuse prevention, relationship enhancement, and family formation services. The second will involve mentoring trainees as they provide the services to their clients. In addition, a network of government and community- and faith-based organizations is expected to assist in addressing other needs of these clients.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program to couples in Fort Leonard Wood, near Waynesville, when the national program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Montana

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2001, Families First of Montana, located in Missoula, received a 20-month grant of \$20,000 in TANF funds for the Family Empowerment Project, administered through the Children’s Trust Fund. The grant was designed to provide a wide array of free services to TANF families, including parenting classes, support groups, programs for divorcing parents, guided play groups, and one-on-one consultations. In addition, these families can also be referred for relationships and marriage strengthening workshops, family strengthening workshops, and couples mediation.<sup>51</sup>

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Nebraska

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In October 2003, the state Department of Health and Human Services received a three-year demonstration grant from the federal Children’s Bureau (\$200,000 annually). This project will focus on the population living in the Omaha Enterprise Community (a HUD-designated enterprise/empowerment zone) and will also be available to the community at large. The planned activities include launching a public awareness program on the benefits for children of stable, healthy marriages and engaging at least 150 couples each year in a six-month-long, individualized strengths-based marriage preparation program. The aim is to increase by 20 percent the number of children in the community raised by both parents in stable and healthy marriages.<sup>52</sup>

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Current eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established separate state program for two-parent families.

## Nevada

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## New Hampshire

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In April 2002, the state legislature passed a bill establishing a legislative committee to research a plan to implement, operate, and fund a marriage education and enhancement program. According to the bill, the program may include premarital education courses and may require students to take a family life skills course for high school graduation. The committee was tasked with looking into building a coalition between state and local officials, the New Hampshire Department of Education, the University of New Hampshire, the state’s cooperative extension, the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, and the New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.<sup>53</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the work history requirements but retained the “100-hour” rule.

## New Jersey

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2003, the First Baptist Community Development Corporation (FBCDC) in Somerset received a \$40,000 grant from the federal ACF Office of Community Services, Block Grant Training and Technical Assistance Program. The FBCDC will expand their family support education and training offered through their Family Resource Center by implementing a relationship/marriage initiative training program called Couples With Promise designed for at-risk couples.<sup>54</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

Marriage Incentive: Since 1992, the state has excluded the income of a non-need step-parent in computing a cash assistance grant, provided the household income does not exceed 150 percent of poverty.

## New Mexico

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

New Mexico set aside \$400,000 in TANF funds for use in FY 2003 to be spent on premarital training, marriage education classes, and fatherhood and parenting programs. A grant was awarded to the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, New Mexico State University, to deliver services to families in three counties. The program, called the Strengthening Families Initiative, will offer parenting classes, enhanced life skills (related to money management and employment, for example), and nutrition education to expectant, teen, single, divorced, abusive, and incarcerated parents. The program, which is offered in English and Spanish, also teaches ways of coping with stress and maintaining healthy couple relationships.<sup>55</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## New York

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In October 2003, two universities in the state were awarded five-year child welfare demonstration grants. At Syracuse University, the grant will be implemented by an inter-professional coalition of academic departments, including the School of Social Work, the Department of Child and Family Studies, and the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy, working with area child welfare agencies. The aim of the project is to lower the rate of child abuse and neglect through strengthening the marriages of families in the child welfare system. Planned activities include: identifying best practices, field testing and disseminating a competency-based training curriculum, training 33 graduate students in the three participating departments, delivering continuing education workshops to 100–150 employees of regional child welfare agencies, and disseminating relevant information to the public through various media outlets.<sup>56</sup> The first-year funding level was \$135,688.

The other grant will be implemented by the School of Social Work, State University of New York at Albany, in collaboration with the State Office for Children and Family Services, the Social Work Education Consortium, and the Center for Human Services Research. The plan is to develop a competency-based curriculum and training plan that promotes family-centered practice, healthy marriage and family formation, and father involvement in child welfare practice. The curriculum and training will be based on emerging research, especially on fragile families and father involvement in child welfare. The activities will be adapted to the cultural needs of a diverse population across the state.<sup>57</sup> The first-year funding level was \$200,000.

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

The Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program was offered to couples in Fort Drum, near Watertown, as part of its pilot program and will be offered again



when the program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## North Carolina

### Program, Activities, and Services

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

The Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program was offered to couples in Fort Bragg, near Fayetteville, as part of its pilot program and will be again when the program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## North Dakota

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: North Dakota strictly enforces higher eligibility requirements for two-parent families.<sup>58</sup> In effect, the state TANF program does not offer benefits to two-parent families. In the few instances when it does, the state places the two-parent families in a separate state program.<sup>59</sup>

Marriage Incentives: The state disregards the income of a step-parent in determining a household’s eligibility for welfare for the first six months after the couple marries.

## Ohio

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2003, Catholic Charities in Cleveland received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the

program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In January 2003, the Cleveland Marriage Coalition (see below) was awarded a \$199,994 Special Improvement Grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement to fund a 17-month pilot program to develop and test a relationship and marriage curriculum for low-income, unmarried parents. The program planned to recruit a total of about 70 low-income couples to participate in two-hour relationship education classes for six weeks. The program is adapting the Survival Skills for Healthy Families curriculum, developed by the Family Wellness Program of Scotts Valley, CA. The program will be evaluated to assess improvements in the couples' relationships, their intent to marry, and the establishment of paternity and payment of child support.<sup>60</sup>

### *State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services*

State extension offices offer educational programs and materials to strengthen couples and marriage, with a special focus on helping couples with remarriage and coping with divorce.<sup>61</sup> The extension service also distributes a quarterly newsletter, *Marriage Matters*, throughout the state. Some agents conduct regular local radio shows on couple and marriage enrichment topics.

The Ohio State University (OSU) Extension Service is collaborating with local professionals to support two multi-sector community marriage coalitions in Cleveland and Columbus (described below).

### *Multi-Sector Community Marriage Initiatives*

The Cleveland Marriage Coalition, founded in January 1999, is a nonprofit, inter-religious organization of individuals, mental health professionals, and interfaith clergy dedicated to strengthening marriage by training professionals to provide relationship skills to engaged and married couples. Its initial aim was to expand the number of clergy signing the Coalition Covenant—a pledge to commit to strengthen marriage and become a resource on marriage-related research, education, and services for public policymakers, community leaders, and the media. In 2003, the Coalition received a federal Office of Child Support Enforcement grant (see above).

The Columbus Marriage Coalition was organized in April 2002 by representatives from the higher education, mental health, faith, and business communities. The goal of the Coalition is to work with the OSU Extension to develop marriage-enhancing programs and services and to serve as an information clearinghouse.<sup>62</sup>

## **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

### **TANF**

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility:** Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Oklahoma\*

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

#### *The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative*

In January 1999, Governor Frank Keating (R), in his Inaugural and State-of-the-State addresses, laid out a series of social goals, including a commitment to reducing the state's divorce and out-of-wedlock birth rates by one-third by 2010. Oklahoma's divorce rate was the second highest in the nation, and he believed it was creating serious, negative economic consequences for children, adults, and the state's economy.

In February 1999, Governor Keating and his wife hosted a conference on marriage, which launched the statewide Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI), a multi-sector effort, including the faith community, business leaders, government officials, legal community, health and social service providers, public education, and the media. A year later, in March 2000, Keating set aside \$10 million from the TANF reserve fund to be used to strengthen marriage and reduce divorce. These funds have primarily been used to provide services to couples, with a special emphasis on serving low-income populations. Other state and private sector funds are also supporting activities of the OMI.

Howard Hendrick, the Director of the Department of Human Services, oversees the OMI. The OMI also has a broad-based, statewide steering committee and a coordination committee (which includes representatives of the domestic violence community) and receives advice and consultation from state and national experts in couples and marriage research, programs, and policy.<sup>63</sup> The OMI is continuing under the administration of Governor Brad Henry (D) who took office in January 2003.

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

Marriage License Fee Reduction: Effective November 1999, couples who participate in premarital counseling receive a reduction in their marriage license fee from \$25 to \$5.

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In its first two years, the OMI consulted with individuals and groups in the public and private sectors and planned future activities. These initial activities were funded with private foundation monies and discretionary state dollars. Under a competitive bid, the Department of Human Services contracted with a small Oklahoma City public affairs/public relations firm, Public Strategies, to manage and coordinate the Initiative. After extensive review and consultation, the OMI selected the Preparation and Relationships Enhancement Program (PREP) curriculum, developed over 20 years at the University of Denver, as the primary service to be offered to couples and individuals.

Since 2000, the Initiative has drawn upon the \$10 million in unspent federal welfare block grant funds for the following activities:

- ✦ Trained state employees from a wide variety of publicly funded agencies and community leaders (for example, clergy and mental health professionals) to offer education and relationships skills workshops (PREP) in every county in the state.

The OMI has formal partnerships with the Department of Health to train child guidance personnel, with Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service to train family life educators, and with the Oklahoma Association of Youth Services to train staff in its first offenders program. In addition, Head Start staff, home visiting nurses, prison chaplains, and others are receiving PREP training.<sup>64</sup>

- \* Piloted a married couples mentoring program to serve as follow-up support for couples participating in the skills workshops.
- \* Provided staff development and training to administrators and supervisors in TANF and other public programs so they can discuss marriage with clients and refer them, when appropriate, to the PREP workshops.
- \* Provided ongoing public education and awareness activities using local and national marriage experts who deliver lectures, write articles, and present at meetings.
- \* Encouraged prominent religious leaders to sign a covenant to offer marriage preparation courses and marriage mentors to couples during the first crucial years of marriage.
- \* Conducted a statewide survey of churches, congregations, synagogues, and mosques to find out what marriage- and family-related services and supports they provided or would be interested in providing.
- \* Collaborated with Oklahoma State University in a variety of research and evaluation activities, including conducting a baseline telephone survey of Oklahomans regarding marriage-related behavior and attitudes about marriage. A preliminary report of the survey was published in July 2002.<sup>65</sup>
- \* Collaborated with the state domestic violence coalition to assure inclusion of information about domestic violence in all levels of training and cross-training of program staff.
- \* Established a Resource Center of materials and program models and a directory of services and programs available throughout the state (see [www.okmarriage.org](http://www.okmarriage.org)).
- \* Hired a full-time person to serve as the state government liaison with the faith-based community on marriage and other issues.

In October 2003, the Children and Family Services Division of the state Department of Human Services was awarded a three-year child welfare demonstration grant by the federal Children's Bureau, ACF (\$200,000 annually). The grant focuses on providing marriage education to families who have been approved to adopt children with special needs. The project will use three different modes of service delivery and a variety of settings and formats, including two weekend retreats (in Oklahoma City and Tulsa) and education workshops for the adoptive parents and also for members of the community. In the second year, the project will serve families in rural areas. An evaluation will compare the results of the different approaches.<sup>66</sup>

### *Relationships and Marriage Education for High School Students*

The OMI-sponsored survey on marriage found that Oklahomans are 2.5 years younger than the national median age when they marry, which the survey authors believe is a factor in the state's high divorce rates.<sup>67</sup> This finding encouraged the OMI to help high school students develop relationships skills, as well as more realistic expectations of marriage. The OMI worked with PREP and Connections (a relationships education programs for high school students) to merge the two curricula into one new version for use in elective Family and Consumer Life Skills classes. For the

pilot program, 24 teachers were trained and “field tested” the combined curriculum to 750 high school students in the spring and summer of 2003. The plan is to roll out a revised curriculum, based on input from the current field test, to 300 teachers for implementation in the 2003–2004 school year.

### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program to couples in Fort Sill, near Lawton, when the program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### *State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services*

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, based at Oklahoma State University, is a partner in the OMI. Thirty-seven of its extension agents offer PREP workshops on a regular basis in counties across the state.

## **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Eliminated the “100-hour rule” but retained the work history requirements for two-parent eligibility. The state is currently piloting a program that eliminates the special work history requirements for two-parent families.

Marriage Incentives: Disregards all income of a TANF recipient’s new spouse for three months. Combines the income of cohabiting, unmarried parents to determine a household’s welfare eligibility.

## **Oregon**

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Eliminated the “100-hour rule” but retained the work history requirement.<sup>69</sup>

## **Pennsylvania**

### **Programs, Activities, and Services**

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In January 2003, the Community Services for Children, Inc. (CSC) in Allentown was awarded a \$177,374 Special Improvement Grant from the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement. CSC, in collaboration with local faith-based organizations, will provide marriage education and employment and other services to unwed parents involved in Early Head Start or Head Start. This project is designed as a 17-month pilot program. The couples, who are screened to rule out domestic violence, attend a 12-week course. Participants receive a meal during the class, child care, and gift certificates to local restaurants. In order to obtain refunding, the program will have to

demonstrate results, which include a declaration of intent to marry from half of the participants and employment for all the men.<sup>70</sup>

In 2003, the Fayette County Community Action Agency (FCAA) in Uniontown received a \$40,000 grant from the federal Office of Community Services, Block Grant Training and Technical Assistance Program. FCAA will add a relationship education component to the range of services it currently offers to low-income couples.<sup>71</sup>

In 2002 and 2003, the Office of Family Life Ministries in Allentown received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Office of Refugee Resettlement, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience. In addition, Catholic Charities of Pittsburgh received a grant from USCCB/MRS in 2003 for similar purposes.

#### *Relationships and Marriage Education for High School Students*

A number of schools in Pennsylvania have adopted PEERS as Partners, a curriculum designed to teach students communication, negotiation, and relationship stress management skills.<sup>72</sup> Designed for classroom settings for students in grades 11 and 12, the Partners curriculum is a 10-week program consisting of 10 50-minute sessions. Students are also taught budgeting skills and how family law impacts their lives.<sup>73</sup> No teacher training is required, although local lawyers usually teach the legal sessions.

#### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In September 1999, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge (R), in conjunction with the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), launched the Pennsylvania Fatherhood Initiative (PFI), as a state-funded affiliate organization. NFI is helping PFI design programs and services that encourage responsible fatherhood.<sup>74</sup> Drawing upon the \$6.5 million allocated by the Pennsylvania state legislature to fund PFI activities, staff from state agencies and community programs will participate in the NFI workshop, “Building Systems that Support Marriage Within Existing Fatherhood Programs.”

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Eliminated the “100-hour rule” but retained the work history requirements.<sup>75</sup>

## **Rhode Island**

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

Established a separate state program for two-parent families who were not able to meet the federal work participation requirement.<sup>76</sup>

## South Carolina

### State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns

In 2001, the state attorney general set up a commission to develop policies to support marriage and families, as well as to explore faith-based programs and mentoring. The panel was to compare South Carolina policies to those of other states to find out which state policies discourage marriage and family formation.<sup>77</sup> However, due to a change in political leadership, the Commission was disbanded without fulfilling its charge.

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In the Department of Social Services, TANF recipients are all expected to participate in a program that includes a variety of life skills, including job readiness, parenting, co-parenting, and relationships skills development. Plans are underway to train faith-based and community leaders in the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) and to make PREP workshops available for TANF recipients who have young children and who are interested in improving co-parenting and/or moving towards marriage.<sup>78</sup>

#### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army's Building Strong and Ready Families program to couples in Fort Jackson, near Columbia, when the program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed "100-hour rule" and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## South Dakota

### State Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Relationship and Marriage Education for High School Students*

In 1999, 40 high school teachers of family and consumer sciences were trained in the Connections Curriculum, a program that teaches communication skills with a focus on marriage and personal relationships. This program was funded for one year through several different sources of state funds. An evaluation of a sample of the students who completed the program compared with those who did not reported some positive changes in conflict resolution skills and in attitudes toward how to strengthen

troubled marriages. While the state-funded program was not continued due to budget cuts, some of the teachers continue to teach the program on a voluntary basis.<sup>79</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: No action taken concerning changes in eligibility. Established a separate state program for two-parent families, but, in 2002, the state had no two-parent cases.<sup>80</sup>

## Tennessee

### Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Law

#### *Marriage License Fee Reduction*

In July 2002, the state legislature increased the marriage license fee from \$10 to \$62.50 but offered a fee reduction of \$60 if applicants provide a valid certificate of completion of an approved premarital course.<sup>81</sup>

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2002 and 2003, Catholic Charities Refugee and Immigration Services in Nashville received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a pilot program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the local Diocesan Office of Family Ministries, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

#### *State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services*

A professor at the University of Tennessee conducts in-service training for state extension service educators in couples and marriage education (training the trainers) to build the capacity of the Extension Service to offer marriage education programs around the state. At these trainings, First Things First (see below) is presented as a model for educating and engaging the community in efforts to strengthen marriages and families.<sup>82</sup>

#### *Multi-Sector Community Marriage Initiatives*

In 1997, several Chattanooga civic leaders formed a community-wide initiative, called First Things First, “to rebuild, renew, and revitalize the city,” beginning with focusing on families. First Things First is a nonprofit organization funded by private foundations and donors. Community organizations, including government agencies (such as schools and health departments), serve as partners in the initiative’s activities.<sup>83</sup>

First Things First has established three strategic goals: to reduce the number of divorces in Hamilton County by 30 percent while at the same time strengthening marriages; to reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies in the county by 30 percent over three



years; and to increase the involvement of fathers in raising their children by 30 percent. The major activities of the initiative include:

- ✦ Under the auspices of Marriage Savers, a national organization, encouraged area churches to sign a community marriage policy in which they pledged to marry only couples who had received a substantial premarital education program.
- ✦ Held many media awareness and communications activities and events designed to promote responsible fatherhood, reduce teen pregnancy, and promote healthy marriages.
- ✦ Organized a Divorce Education and Mediation Pilot Project for the county courts.
- ✦ Worked with the business community and other partners to focus on family-friendly workplace policies and to recognize a family-friendly Business of the Year and a Family of the Year.
- ✦ Hosted training seminars for area counselors and mental health professionals to teach them skills needed to help couples overcome difficulties and stay married.
- ✦ Held various events to promote the importance of effective fathering, including a Fatherhood Summit and Symposium, and brought the program, Boot Camp for New Dads, to area hospitals.
- ✦ Worked with the Health Department, Regional Health Council, and the County Medical Society to provide public information and awareness about teen pregnancy prevention and out-of-wedlock childbearing.
- ✦ Held marriage educational seminars and day-long workshops for hundreds of couples on relationships skills.

## Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

### *TANF*<sup>84</sup>

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility:** Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

**Marriage Incentive:** Those welfare recipients who marry may choose to either include or exclude the spouse from the assistance group in determining continued eligibility. If including the spouse in the group, his/her income is disregarded if it is below 185 percent of the need standard for the household.

### *Child Support*

The state forgives child support arrearages owed by a non-custodial parent who marries the custodial parent of his or her children, as long as he or she resides in the home.

## Texas

### State Policy Initiatives, Commission, and Campaigns

In 2003, the state legislature required the welfare department to create a Healthy Marriage Development Program for welfare recipients. The legislation called for three types of instructional courses on (i) skill development for engaged and married couples; (ii) physical fitness and nutrition and cooking; and (iii) parenting skills, including step-parenting. The law also requires the department to pay couples up to \$20 per month, per course, to facilitate participation in these courses.

## Programs, Activities, and Services

### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 1999, Governor George W. Bush (R) signed legislation increasing the marriage license fee by \$3. The monies go into a Family Trust Fund, administered by the attorney general, which supports a number of marriage-related activities and research.<sup>85</sup> The law also required the creation of a premarital education manual to be distributed to all marrying couples. The handbook, *When You Get Married*, was prepared by the Attorney General's Office under the guidance of an advisory committee whose members included marriage and family counseling professionals, religious practitioners, and family law attorneys. This handbook is also given to school-age parents who are not married.

In 2003, two organizations in the state—the Diocesan Migrant and Refugee Services in Dallas and Catholic Charities of the Dioceses of Galveston-Houston—received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct the Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

### *Relationship and Marriage Education for High School Students*

The Child Support Division of the Attorney General's Office is updating a school-based curriculum, PAPA, to include discussion of marriage. This curriculum will be provided at no cost to all secondary schools in Texas. Information is included about the possible benefits to children when parents marry. The companion video includes interviews with young couples who are married and who are considering marriage.

### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

In 1999, Governor Bush started the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) of Texas with a seed grant. The NFI of Texas seeks to improve the health and well-being of children by reducing father absence and promoting responsible fatherhood through information and public awareness and education activities. Beginning in 2003, NFI of Texas has focused on integrating a marriage component into its activities, including piloting a one-day workshop, *Building Systems of Support for Marriage in Fatherhood Programs*.<sup>86</sup>

Part of the Ford Foundation's and the federal Office of Child Support's Fragile Families Initiative, the Texas Fragile Families (TFF) Initiative is a partnership of the Center for Public Policy Priorities and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. Local foundations are also providing support. In 2000, TFF funded 11 demonstration programs across the state to provide employment-related, education, and peer-support services to young fathers and their families. The sites have worked closely with local child support offices. In four of these sites, called the Bootstrap Project, peer groups participate in extensive parent education training, including skills training, mediation services, and legal assistance for those who decide to pursue marriage with the mother of their children.<sup>87</sup>

### *Military Marriage-Related Programs*

Planning is underway to offer the Army’s Building Strong and Ready Families program to couples in Fort Bliss, near El Paso, and in Fort Hood, near Killeen, when the program is expanded. This program offers enlisted soldiers and their spouses marital assessments and relationships skills training (PREP curriculum); extensive health assessments, screening, and referrals (including for substance abuse and domestic violence); and marriage enrichment weekends.

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

Marriage Incentive: Since June 2002, excludes the income of a new spouse for six months in establishing eligibility for TANF.

## **Utah\***

### **State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns**

In 1994, Governor Mike Leavitt (R) and First Lady Jacalyn S. Leavitt established the Governor’s Initiative on Families Today (GIFT) to focus attention on strengthening marriages and families. GIFT sponsors marriage enrichment conferences each year, featuring local and national experts on marriage and parenting. The Governor’s Commission on Marriage, formed in 1998, received \$600,000 in TANF funds for four specific projects towards the fulfillment of the fourth TANF purpose, “Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.” The TANF-funded activities are described below.

Each year during his administration, former Governor Leavitt signed marriage proclamations stating that marriage is important to the public good, and, in 2001-2003, recognizing February 7-14 as Marriage Week USA.<sup>88</sup> The Marriage Commission holds an annual recognition of “Gold Medal Marriages,” and the Governor and First Lady honor the state’s “Couple Married Longest” each year at the GIFT annual conference. The Commission is asking mayors and community leaders in Utah to honor and recognize marriage in their jurisdictions.

### **Programs, Activities, and Services**

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

The Governor’s Commission on Marriage uses TANF funds for various projects, including:

- ❖ A booklet, titled *Building a Successful Marriage*, which is for home-visiting nurses, Head Start programs, and others to distribute to young, unmarried parents (“fragile families”) and families with a parent in prison.
- ❖ A website, [www.utahmarriage.org](http://www.utahmarriage.org), provides information about marriage enrichment and other resources and a toll-free telephone information and referral service.
- ❖ An 18-minute video in English and in Spanish titled, *Marriage News You Can Use*, which is given to all couples who apply for a marriage license and made available

at high schools, public libraries, Family Support Centers, and PTA Resource Centers.

- ✦ Training family life educators, cooperative extension agents, religious leaders, and others in the PREP relationships skills program to provide free workshops to community residents.
- ✦ Conducting a statewide survey on marriage behavior and attitudes, using the survey instrument developed by the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (see p. 49).<sup>89</sup> The report was published in December 2003.<sup>90</sup>

### *Relationships and Marriage Education for High School Students*

An elective high school course, “Adult Roles and Responsibilities,” is offered in approximately 97 high schools in the state. Twenty percent of Utah juniors and seniors take the class. The state plans to apply for funding to add material on child development and parenting, provide schools with textbooks and audio-visual materials for the course, and expand the program into additional high schools.

### *State Cooperative Extension Marriage-Related Services*

The Utah State University Cooperative Extension Service is working with the Governor’s Commission to offer marriage-related services, including planning PREP leaders training and creating an online course for credit. In addition, the Extension Service is conducting a survey of couples who were given the video, *Marriage News You Can Use*, to assess whether it was helpful.<sup>91</sup>

## **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## **Vermont**

### **Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support**

#### *TANF*

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

#### *Child Support*

If arrearages accrue after support rights have been assigned and the parents subsequently reunite, the Office of Child Support may not take any action to collect the support arrearages, unless the reunited family has a gross income equal to or greater than 225 percent of the federal poverty level.<sup>92</sup>

## **Virginia\***

### **Programs, Activities, and Services**

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

Virginia’s Partners in Prevention (PIP) program, sponsored by the Department of Health, is an initiative to reduce the number of out-of-wedlock births among young

adults aged 20-29, primarily by focusing on relationships and marriage. The program has received \$1 million in TANF monies each year for four years to fund approximately 18 community coalitions representing 48 cities and counties. These coalitions are charged with reaching out to young adults (and their parents) with messages designed to discourage risky sexual behavior, avoid abusive and violent relationships, and promote waiting until marriage to have children. One community program, “Marriage Before the Carriage,” held a prize drawing for a new car for young people who signed a statement that they were waiting until marriage to have children.

In 2002, the Virginia Health Department produced a TV public service announcement with the message that babies need two parents and that “Marriage First” . . . is “the thing to do.”

In 2003, the Diocesan Refugee and Immigration Services in Richmond received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct a program, Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the Diocesan Office of Family Life Ministries, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

#### *Fatherhood Programs with Co-Parenting and Marriage Components*

Founded in 1996, the Virginia Fatherhood Campaign (VFC), based in the Virginia Department of Health, was the first statewide, state-funded fatherhood campaign in the nation. The goals of the VFC are to: improve fathering skills, involve fathers in the lives of their children, and keep fathers involved in the lives of their children. The VFC has provided seed money to approximately 75 fatherhood programs across the state. In addition, it provides public education and a resource center of fatherhood materials and has aired public service announcements. In 2003, VFC received funding from TANF, at the level of \$400,000 annually. VFC contracts with the National Fatherhood Initiative to provide a marriage section in four regional trainings each year for approximately 200 family service workers.

Two of VFC’s affiliated fatherhood programs in Hampton conduct activities to promote co-parenting and marriage.<sup>93</sup> Parents Educating Parents, Inc. (PEP), an initiative focused primarily on fathers, has developed a program, Preparing for Deployment, to strengthen relationships between fathers and mothers in the military. PEP also conducts a program for incarcerated dads, which facilitates family visitation and offers pro bono legal assistance, child support counseling, and job assistance, as well as group discussions about the value of marriage.

In 2002, the Hampton Roads Healthy Marriages project was launched. In collaboration with the Hampton University CARE (HU-CARE) Fatherhood Program, it offers courses for couples on healthy relationships and parenting.<sup>94</sup>

In July 2003, the state Department of Social Services (DSS) announced a federal grant of \$990,000 from the Office of Child Support Enforcement (under a 1115 waiver program) to the Hampton Road Marriage Coalition for a four-year project, which

will include employment, social services, and child support and fatherhood services, as well as family relationships and parenting skills. Combined with matching local and state funds, the total project funding is \$1.679 million.

The project's main goals are to improve paternity establishment and increase financial support for children. It places a major emphasis on helping both custodial and non-custodial parents participate in employment. State fatherhood programs HU-CARE and PEP will be closely involved in providing services. The project will make extensive use of case managers. In addition, the project will attempt to promote stable family environments, improve couple's relationships and reduce the potential for domestic violence. (Project personnel will be required to screen participants for evidence of domestic violence and refer appropriate individuals for services.) Peninsula Marriage and Family Resource Center is being set up to provide workshops for married, single, separated, divorced, and cohabiting couples on a wide range of topics. The project will be evaluated by a team from the DSS research and statistics office.<sup>95</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### *TANF*

**Two-Parent Family Eligibility:** Removed the "100-hour rule" and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances. Established a separate state program for two-parent families.

## Washington

### Programs, Activities, and Services

#### *Couples and Marriage Education for Adults*

In 2003, the Refugee Assistance Program of the Archdiocesan Housing Authority in Seattle received federal Office of Refugee Resettlement funds through the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS) to conduct the Strengthening Refugee Families and Marriages Program. Working with the Diocesan Office of Family Life Ministries, the program seeks to strengthen refugee families and marriages by providing communication, conflict resolution, listening, parenting, and financial management skills training. The activities are also designed to increase community understanding of the challenges facing refugees during the resettlement experience.

#### *Multi-Sector Community Marriage Initiatives*

Founded in 1997, Families Northwest, a nonprofit organization originally focused on the religious sector, began working with the government and other sectors in 2001. In its first years, it focused primarily on encouraging churches throughout the state to sign Marriage and Family Agreements (MFA), in which a group of churches in a community agree to work cooperatively to uphold the societal value of marriage and healthy families and relationships. In addition, Families Northwest has conducted numerous church leadership forums; created a website, PSAs, and an online newsletter, *Marriage Matters*; and conducted various research activities. It has received funding from private foundations, corporations, churches, and individual donors.

In 2002, Families Northwest planned a conference, *Working Together to Strengthen Families*, with the Pacific regional office of the federal Administration for Children and Families. The conference focused on strengthening couple relationships and promoting fatherhood and marriage. Families Northwest has also been working closely with government officials and Native American leaders to develop a proposal for federal funding for a community-based project to strengthen fatherhood and promote healthy marriages in Yakima County.<sup>96</sup>

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## West Virginia

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

Marriage Incentive: Adds a \$100 “marriage bonus” payment to the monthly cash benefit of any family that includes a legally married man and woman who live together and have children in common.

## Wisconsin

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Wyoming

### Policy Changes in TANF and Child Support

#### TANF

Two-Parent Family Eligibility: Removed the “100-hour rule” and work history requirements. Eligibility is based exclusively on financial circumstances.

## Endnotes

1. This study is co-directed by Sara McLanahan, Princeton University, and Irv Garfinkel, Columbia University. See <http://crcw.princeton.edu/fragilefamilies>.
2. Castaldo, L. (2003, June 6). Personal communication. For more information, contact Lisa Castaldo, Program Director for Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Programs, Children's Trust Fund of Alabama, 334-353-4563, [lcastaldo@ctf.state.al.us](mailto:lcastaldo@ctf.state.al.us).
3. Francesca Adler-Baeder, Ph.D., CFLE (Certified Family Life Educator ). (2002, September 24). E-mail posting on [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com) on-line newsletter. For further information, contact Dr. Adler-Baeder at Auburn University, 334-844-3234 or [adlerfr@auburn.edu](mailto:adlerfr@auburn.edu).
4. Fitzgerald, E. (2002, August). Central Office, Alaska Division of Public Assistance. Personal communication.
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9. See [www.smartmarriages.com/legislation.html#governor's](http://www.smartmarriages.com/legislation.html#governor's).
10. See [www.divorcereform.org/cov.html](http://www.divorcereform.org/cov.html) for information on Arkansas covenant marriage laws.
11. See [www.NIRE.org](http://www.NIRE.org) for information about the Relationship Enhancement (RE) program. RE is one of the most extensively tested skill-building programs. Evaluations show impressive short-term gains in skills for participating couples compared to control groups. See Silliman, B., Stanley, S.M., Coffin, W., Markman, H.J., & Jordan, P.L. (2001). Preventive interventions for couples. In H. Liddle, D. Santisteban, R. Levant, & J. Bray (Eds.). *Family psychology intervention science*. Washington, DC: APA Publications.
12. Contact Jim Deming, state Department of Social Services, at 714-480-6411 or Dennis Stoica, Orange County Marriage Resource Center, at [Dennis@OCMarriage.org](mailto:Dennis@OCMarriage.org) or 562-407-0340.
13. Santillanes, L. (2003, April 7). Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Consortium. Personal communication. For more information, contact Laura Santillanes at 760-397-0455 or [lsantillanes@tribal.tanf.com](mailto:lsantillanes@tribal.tanf.com).
14. For further information, contact Danelle Young, Manager, Office of Self Sufficiency, Department of Human Services, at [danelle.young@state.co.us](mailto:danelle.young@state.co.us).
15. For further information, contact Sandra Spears, Institute for Families, School of Social Work, Denver University, at 303-871-4174.
16. For further information, contact Nancy Lucero at the Denver Indiana Family Resource Center, [nlucero@difrc.org](mailto:nlucero@difrc.org).
17. For information, contact Robert P. Hall, Executive Director, Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families, 302-225-1040
18. The curriculum used in these workshops was a blend of the Relationships Enhancement (RE) program curricula and C-PREP (Christian PREP). For more information, contact Andrea Hughes, President, Abundantly Living Services, 202-268-3449 or [ayeds@lycos.com](mailto:ayeds@lycos.com).
19. Karen Murphy (2003, April 8). Department of Children and Families. Personal communication.
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21. Hicks, M. (2003, February). Florida State University. Personal communication. Contact Professor Mary Hicks at [mhicks@mailier.fsu.edu](mailto:mhicks@mailier.fsu.edu).
22. For more information, contact Lyndee Odom (850-487-8120) or Jeff Johnson (850-414-2592) in the Department of Children and Families.
23. For more information, contact John Gottman, [johng@u.washington.edu](mailto:johng@u.washington.edu), or [gottman@gottman.com](mailto:gottman@gottman.com).
24. PAIRS, Practical Application of Relationships Skills, is a relationships skills program developed by Lori Gordon. It has been



- adapted for couples of different faiths and high school students. See [www.pairs.com](http://www.pairs.com).
25. See [www.pairs.com](http://www.pairs.com).
  26. For more information about this curriculum, contact Millie Ferrer at [mferrer@mail.ifas.ufl.edu](mailto:mferrer@mail.ifas.ufl.edu).
  27. Gunter, D. (2002, August). Georgia Economic Support Services. Personal communication.
  28. Yarborough, D. (2003, May 15). Co-Chair, Healthy Families-Nampa coalition. Personal communication. Also, see May 9, 2003, press release issued by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. For more information, contact Dr. Doug Yarborough at [grace@nampa.net](mailto:grace@nampa.net) or Tammy Payne, Project Manager, Idaho Department of Welfare, 208-442-9975.
  29. Reynolds, V. (2002, August). Indiana Family Support Services Administration. Personal communication.
  30. Contact Andrew Stoner, Governor's Executive Assistant for Human Services, at [astoner@gov.state.ia.us](mailto:astoner@gov.state.ia.us).
  31. Contact Becky Antle (502-852-2917) or Dr. Bibhuti Sar (502-852-3932), both at the School of Social Work, University of Louisville.
  32. Barkley, R. (2002, August). Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children, Policy Development Office. Personal communication.
  33. Fagan, P.F. (2001, March 26). *Encouraging marriage and discouraging divorce*. Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation. Available at [www.heritage.org/research/Family/BG1421.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/Family/BG1421.cfm).
  34. See [www.smartmarriages.com/legislation.html#governor's](http://www.smartmarriages.com/legislation.html#governor's).
  35. The National Science Foundation and the Smith Richardson Foundation have funded a study of the implementation of the law as well as a comparison of couples who choose the covenant marriage option with those who did not. For more information, contact Professor Steven Nock, Department of Sociology, University of Virginia, 804-924-6519, [SLN@Virginia.edu](mailto:SLN@Virginia.edu). One of the implementation study's preliminary findings was that no funding was provided to train county clerks who were responsible for offering the information about the covenant marriage option. See also Spaht, K. (1998). Louisiana's covenant marriage: Social analysis and legal implications. *Louisiana Law Review*, 59, 63-130.
  36. For information about the national survey, see <http://crcw.princeton.edu/fragilefamilies/>. The LA survey was conducted by Maximus Inc. The report was released in January 2004. Visit [www.state.la.us/tanf/fragfam.htm](http://www.state.la.us/tanf/fragfam.htm).
  37. For further information, contact John McInturf at [jmcinturf@dss.state.la.us](mailto:jmcinturf@dss.state.la.us).
  38. Masure, R. (August, 2002). Maine Bureau of Family Independence. Personal communication.
  39. Contact: Terri W. Hopkins, Office of Community Initiatives, Department of Human Resources at 410-767-7393 or [thopkins@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:thopkins@dhr.state.md.us).
  40. Jones, J. (2002, December-2003, February). Executive Director, Center for Fathers and Workforce Development, Baltimore. Personal communications.
  41. Sorensen, E. (2003, January 10). Urban Institute. Personal communication.
  42. Governor's Advisory Commission on Responsible Fatherhood and Family Support. (1998, June). *Dads make a difference: Action for responsible fatherhood*. Boston, MA: Department of Revenue, Child Support Enforcement, pp. 6-11.
  43. Claytor, R. (2003, May 10). Director, Fatherhood Initiative. Personal communication. For more information, contact Richard Claytor, at 617-626-4171 or [richard.claytor@state.ma.us](mailto:richard.claytor@state.ma.us).
  44. O'Brien, M. (2002, August). Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, Policy, Procedure and Management Unit. Personal communication.
  45. Gibson, S. (2003, April, 7). Michigan Family Independence Agency. Personal communication; Zylstra, A. (2002, December 6). Family Independence Agency, Kent County. Personal communication. Contact [zylstraa@michigan.gov](mailto:zylstraa@michigan.gov).
  46. For more information, contact Carol Vander Wal, Project Director, at [info@ggrcmarriagepolicy.org](mailto:info@ggrcmarriagepolicy.org).
  47. The initiative changed its name in October 2002 from the Greater Grand Rapids Community Marriage Policy. The chairman of the initiative, Bill Hardiman, was mayor of Kentwood, the largest suburb in Kent County. In 2002, he was elected to the state senate. See [www.ggrcmarriagepolicy.org](http://www.ggrcmarriagepolicy.org).
  48. See National Center for Fathering, [www.fathers.com](http://www.fathers.com), or call 800-593-DADS. To contact the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative

- visit [www.mdhs.state.ms.us/cs\\_resp.html](http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/cs_resp.html), or call 800-421-0762.
49. Butler, V. (2002, August). Mississippi Department of Human Services. Personal communication.
  50. For information, contact Jennifer Baker, Director, Marriage and Family Institute, Forest Institute, at 417-823-3423.
  51. Staton, J. (2003, May 20). Marriage Works Learning Center ([www.marriageworksmontana.com](http://www.marriageworksmontana.com)). Personal communication. For further information, contact Diana Reitz-Stacy, Families First, at 401-721-7690 or Bette Hall, Department of Public Health and Human Services, at [bhall@state.mt.us](mailto:bhall@state.mt.us).
  52. For information, contact Chris Hanus, Office of Protection and Safety, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, at 402-471-9308.
  53. See [www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2002/HB1299.html](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/legislation/2002/HB1299.html). Also contact state Representatives Barbara French at 603-428-3366 and Barbara Richardson at 603-239-8346.
  54. For further information, contact Sharon Tucker Brown, Executive Director, First Baptist Community Development Corporation, at 732-249-5476.
  55. Office of Family Assistance, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (February, 2003). *TANF fifth annual report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Author, p. 158. For more information, contact David Devitt, Regional Operations Manager, state Department of Human Services, at 505-437-9260, ext. 128, or [david.devitt@state.nm.us](mailto:david.devitt@state.nm.us). Also contact Dr. Anne Vail, Chair, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, New Mexico State University, at [avail@nmsu.edu](mailto:avail@nmsu.edu).
  56. For information, contact Keith Alford, Department of Child and Family Studies, Syracuse University, at 315-443-5550.
  57. For information, contact Catherine Lawrence, Project Director, School of Social Welfare, University of Albany, [clawrence@albany.edu](mailto:clawrence@albany.edu).
  58. Cartledge, C. (2002, August). North Dakota Department of Human Services, Office of Economic Assistance. Personal communication.
  59. Storrs, M. (2003, January). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Personal communication.
  60. Bender, S. (2003, March 21). Executive Director, Cleveland Marriage Coalition. Personal communication. Contact at 216-321-5274 or [sandrabender@ameritech.net](mailto:sandrabender@ameritech.net).
  61. See [www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife/family/](http://www.hec.ohio-state.edu/famlife/family/) for more information.
  62. For more information about the Columbus Marriage Coalition, contact Ted Futris, Extension Specialist, OSU, at 614-688-4169 or [futris.1@osu.edu](mailto:futris.1@osu.edu).
  63. For more information, see Myrick, M., & Ooms, T. (2002). *What if a governor decided to address the M-word? The use of research in the design and implementation of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative*. Paper presented at the American Association of Public Policy and Management annual conference in Dallas, November 7, 2002. Available from [tooms@clasp.org](mailto:tooms@clasp.org).
  64. By January 2004, approximately 1,100 workshop leaders and 260 high school teachers had been trained. More than 15,000 people had attended workshops.
  65. Johnson, C.A., Stanley, S.M., Glenn, N.D., Amato, P.R., Nock, S.L., Markman, H.J., et al. (2002). *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce*. Oklahoma City: Bureau for Social Research, Oklahoma State University. Available at [www.okmarriage.org](http://www.okmarriage.org).
  66. For information, contact Margaret De Vault, Programs Manager, Post-Adoption Services, DHS/Child Welfare, at 405-522-2467.
  67. See Johnson et al., 2002, pp. 11, 21.
  68. Butcher, P. (2002, August). Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Personal communication.
  69. Stell, J. (2002, August). Oregon Department of Human Services. Personal communication.
  70. See O’Crowley, P. (2003, November 23). *Program nudges parents toward marriage*, Newhouse News Service, *The Seattle Times*.
  71. For further information, contact James Stark, Executive Director, FCAA, 724-430-3011.
  72. See [www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com).
  73. See [www.pairs.com](http://www.pairs.com).
  74. See [www.fatherhood.org/pa.htm](http://www.fatherhood.org/pa.htm).
  75. Bean, G. (2002, August). Pennsylvania Office of Welfare Reform Initiative. Personal communication.
  76. Storrs, M. (2003, January). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

- Administration for Children and Families. Personal communication.
77. See [www.smartmarriages.com/south-carolina.marriage.html](http://www.smartmarriages.com/south-carolina.marriage.html).
78. Kennedy, G. (2004, February). Program Coordinator, Department of Social Services. Personal communication. For more information, contact Gilda Kennedy at 803-898-7436 or [gkennedy@dss.state.sc.us](mailto:gkennedy@dss.state.sc.us).
79. Gardner, S.P. (2001). Evaluation of the "Connections: Relationships and Marriage" curriculum. *Journal of Family and Consumer Science Education*, 19(1). For more information, contact Professor Scott Gardner, Cooperative Extension, South Dakota State University, at 605-688-5956.
80. Storrs, M. (2003, January 10). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. Personal communication.
81. See [www.smartmarriages.com/tennessee-legislation.html](http://www.smartmarriages.com/tennessee-legislation.html).
82. For more information, contact Denise Brandon, Associate Professor, University of Tennessee Extension Service, at [dbrandon@utk.edu](mailto:dbrandon@utk.edu).
83. See [www.firstthings.org/green/whatis.html](http://www.firstthings.org/green/whatis.html).
84. Coomer, D. (2002, August). Tennessee Department of Human Services, Family Assistance Division. Personal communication.
85. Hayes, M. (2003, February 6). Manager, Collaborations, Fatherhood and Family Initiatives, Office of the Attorney General. Personal communication. For further information, contact Michael Hayes at 512-460-6218 or [michael.hayes@cs.oag.state.tx.us](mailto:michael.hayes@cs.oag.state.tx.us).
86. The Texas Fatherhood Initiative is an affiliate of the National Fatherhood Initiative. For more information, contact John Chacon, Executive Director of the NFI's Southwest Region Office, at 512-453-5056, or [tfi2000@austin.rr.com](mailto:tfi2000@austin.rr.com).
87. See [www.cppp.org/tff/about](http://www.cppp.org/tff/about).
88. For information on Marriage Week USA, see [www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=2328d9asdf](http://www.utahmarriage.org/index.cfm?id=2328d9asdf). The Commission's website is [www.utahmarriage.org](http://www.utahmarriage.org).
89. Johnson, et al., 2002.
90. Schramm, D., Marshall, J., Harris, V., & George, A. (2003, October). *Marriage in Utah: Baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce*. Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Department of Workforce Services. Available at [www.utahmarriage.org](http://www.utahmarriage.org).
91. For more information, contact Thomas Lee, PhD, Utah State University, at [toml@ext.usu.edu](mailto:toml@ext.usu.edu).
92. See Gardiner, K.N., Fishman, M.E., Nikolov, P., Glosser, A., & Laud, S. (September 2002). *State policies to promote marriage. Final report*. Falls Church, VA: The Lewin Group, Inc. Available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/marriage02f/>.
93. Clark, R. (2003, January). Director, Virginia Fatherhood Campaign. Personal communication. Also see [www.vahealth.org/fatherhood](http://www.vahealth.org/fatherhood).
94. Babineaux, J. (2003, January 16). Executive Director of PEP, Inc. Personal communication. See also [www.PEPinc.org](http://www.PEPinc.org). Contact Babineaux at 757-265-3566 or [jbabineaux@cox.net](mailto:jbabineaux@cox.net).
95. For further information, contact Todd Areson, Division of Child Support, at 804-692-1463.
96. Krasky, J. (2002, December). Personal communication. For information, contact Jason Krasky, Marriage Builders Director, Families Northwest, at [jasonk@familiesnorthwest.org](mailto:jasonk@familiesnorthwest.org). For information about Families Northwest and its multi-sector, 10-year strategic plan, see [www.familiesnorthwest.org](http://www.familiesnorthwest.org).

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Method and Primary Sources

Information about couples and marriage policy and programming is highly fragmented and dispersed. In most states, no single office, organization, or individual monitors developments in this arena. Therefore, this report has been compiled from a variety of published secondary sources and websites and supplemented by Internet inquiries and phone calls to verify and update information. The four major sources are described below. Additional references and citations are provided in the endnotes.

This report is built on the foundation laid in 2002 by the Lewin Group report, *State Policies to Promote Marriage*. Produced under contract with the federal government, it was the first report on this subject, serving as an important baseline.<sup>1</sup> Using secondary sources, the Lewin report inventories a very wide range of policies, legislative proposals, and non-governmental programs related directly and indirectly to marriage.

For information on state TANF policy, we relied initially upon the State Policy Documentation Project (SPDP), a database of state TANF policies between 1997 and 1999, compiled by CLASP and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities ([www.spdp.org](http://www.spdp.org)). This was supplemented by a useful 2001 report from the Congressional Research Service, *Welfare Reform: TANF Provisions Related to Marriage and Two-Parent Families*,<sup>2</sup> as well as phone interviews with federal officials and TANF officials in numerous states.

Another valuable resource was the Coalition for Marriage, Family, and Couples Education website ([www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com)), which includes a directory of programs, information about the organization's annual conference, "Smart Marriages," and an archive of news articles and postings about legislation and marriage-related developments in states and communities.

A range of important marriage-related activities in states did not meet the criteria for this study—that is, they were not new initiatives specifically designed to promote marriage, discourage divorce, or strengthen two-parent families that included some level of government involvement. For example, a growing number of marriage-related services are being offered by the faith-based and nonprofit sectors with no government involvement. The following types of marriage-related activities are *not* included in this report, but we list them here for those interested in couples and marriage policy more generally (see the endnotes for sources of additional information):

- \* Basic state marriage laws and divorce-related statutes.<sup>3</sup>
- \* State laws protecting domestic partnerships or allowing or disallowing gay and lesbian unions or marriages.<sup>4</sup>
- \* Marriage "penalties" and "bonuses" in state tax policies.<sup>5</sup>
- \* Public assistance programs (e.g., Medicaid, Food Stamps, and housing programs) that may *indirectly* encourage or strengthen marriage.<sup>6</sup>

- ✦ State vital statistics (e.g., marriage and divorce rates) that provide the ability to monitor trends at state and county levels.<sup>7</sup>
  - ✦ Teen pregnancy prevention programs that seek to prevent non-marital childbearing.<sup>8</sup>
  - ✦ Schools or communities that offer character education, abstinence education, and comprehensive sex education curricula that may incorporate a minor focus on marriage.<sup>9</sup>
  - ✦ Community Marriage Policies® (CMP), in which faith leaders sign an agreement to strengthen marriages and reduce a community's divorce rate. CMPs have been established in about 160 communities in 38 states.<sup>10</sup>
  - ✦ The more than 2,000 domestic violence programs across the country that provide a variety of services to women and families at risk of domestic abuse, as well as associated public information and awareness activities.<sup>11</sup> Forty-one states have certified that they have implemented the TANF Family Violence Option, which allows states to waive program requirements for victims of domestic violence.<sup>12</sup>
5. For more information on federal and state tax policies and their relation to family formation, see Congressional Budget Office. (1997, June). *For better or for worse: Marriage and the federal income tax*. Washington, DC: Author.
  6. For more information on state Medicaid policy and how it relates to family formation, see the Lewin Report.
  7. For more information on state vital statistics, see the Lewin Report, visit the National Center for Health Statistics website at [www.cdc.gov/nchs/](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/), or visit a specific state government or health department website.
  8. For more information, visit the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy website at [www.teenpregnancy.org](http://www.teenpregnancy.org).
  9. For more information on abstinence-until-marriage education, go to the Lewin Report. Also see Devaney, B., Johnson, A., Maynard, R., & Trenholm, C. (2002, April). *The evaluation of abstinence education programs funded under Title V Section 510: Interim report*. Princeton, N.J: Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
  10. Community Marriage Policy is a registered trademark of Marriage Savers. For more information, visit [www.marriagesavers.org/aboutmarriagesavers.htm](http://www.marriagesavers.org/aboutmarriagesavers.htm).
  11. For a list of state coalitions, contact the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org). For other useful information on domestic violence, see the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, which operates the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, at [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org). Also see McHardy, L.W., & Hofford, M. (1998). *Family violence: Emerging programs for battered mothers and their children*. Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges.
  12. The Family Violence Option gives each state the option to certify in its state plan that it has established standards and procedures to screen and identify individuals to determine if they have a history of domestic violence, to refer them for counseling and supportive services, and to waive program requirements, as appropriate, based on safety and fairness concerns. See Administration for Children and Families. (2003, February). *TANF Fifth Annual Report to Congress*. Washington, DC: Author, Table 12:12, p. XII-351.

## Endnotes

1. Gardiner, K.N., Fishman, M.E., Nikolov, P., Glosser, A., & Laud, S. (September 2002). *State policies to promote marriage. Final report*. Falls Church, VA: The Lewin Group, Inc. Available at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/marriage02/index.htm>. Referred to hereafter as the Lewin report.
2. Falk, G., & Tauber, J. (2001). *Welfare reform: TANF provisions related to marriage and two-parent families*. Document No. RL31170. Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service.
3. Up-to-date information on marriage and divorce law can be found at [www.law.cornell.edu/topics/](http://www.law.cornell.edu/topics/).
4. For more information, go to Alternatives to Marriage Project at [www.unmarried.org](http://www.unmarried.org) or the Human Rights Campaign at [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org).

# Appendix II: Summary of State Efforts to Strengthen Marriage

State	State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns	Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Laws		Programs,			
		Marriage License	Covenant Marriage	Couples and Marriage Education for Adults	Relationships and Marriage Education in High Schools	Fatherhood/Co-Parenting & Marriage	
Alabama				X			
Alaska							
Arizona*	X		X	X		X	
Arkansas	X		X				
California				X			
Colorado	X			X			
Connecticut				X			
Delaware							
District of Columbia				X			
Florida*	X	X		X	X	X	
Georgia				X			
Hawaii							
Idaho				X			
Illinois				X			
Indiana				X			
Iowa	X						
Kansas							

\* = "High activity" state. See p. 11 for more information.

\*\* = Partially eliminated higher requirements. See state entry.

\*\*\* = See state entry.

No Action = State has not taken any action to modify or eliminate higher eligibility requirements for two-parent families.

## and Two-Parent Families

Activities, and Services				TANF & Child Support Policy Changes			
	Military Marriage-Related Programs	State Cooperative Extension Programs	Multi-Sector Community Initiatives	Treat 2-Parent and Single-Parent Families the Same	Have Separate 2-Parent State Program	Marriage Incentive	Child Support Arrears Forgiveness
		X		X	X	X	
	X			X			
	X			**			
				X			
				**	X	X	
				X			
				X	X		
			X	X	X		
				No Action			
		X		X	X		
				**	X		
	X			X	X		
				X			
				X	X		
				**	X		
				X			
	X			X			

# Appendix II: Summary of State Efforts to Strengthen Marriage

State	State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns	Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Laws		Programs,			
		Marriage License	Covenant Marriage	Couples and Marriage Education for Adults	Relationships and Marriage Education in High Schools	Fatherhood/Co-Parenting & Marriage	
Kentucky				X			
Louisiana*	X		X	X		X	
Maine				X			
Maryland		X				X	
Massachusetts						X	
Michigan*				X		X	
Minnesota		X		X			
Mississippi						X	
Missouri				X			
Montana				X			
Nebraska				X			
Nevada							
New Hampshire				X			
New Jersey				X			
New Mexico				X			
New York				X			
North Carolina							

\* = "High activity" state. See p. 11 for more information.

\*\* = Partially eliminated higher requirements. See state entry.

\*\*\* = See state entry.

No Action = State has not taken any action to modify or eliminate higher eligibility requirements for two-parent families.



## and Two-Parent Families (continued)

Activities, and Services				TANF & Child Support Policy Changes			
	Military Marriage-Related Programs	State Cooperative Extension Programs	Multi-Sector Community Initiatives	Treat 2-Parent and Single-Parent Families the Same	Have Separate 2-Parent State Program	Marriage Incentive	Child Support Arrears Forgiveness
	X			**			
				X			
				**			
				X	X		***
				**			
			X	X			
				X	X		
				X		X	
	X			X			
				X			
				X	X		
				X	X		
				**			
				X	X	X	
				X			
	X			X			
	X			X			

## Appendix II: Summary of State Efforts to Strengthen Marriage

State	State Policy Initiatives, Commissions, and Campaigns	Changes in State Marriage and Divorce Laws		Programs,			
		Marriage License	Covenant Marriage	Couples and Marriage Education for Adults	Relationships and Marriage Education in High Schools	Fatherhood/Co-Parenting & Marriage	
North Dakota							
Ohio				X		X	
Oklahoma*	X	X		X	X		
Oregon							
Pennsylvania				X	X	X	
Rhode Island							
South Carolina	X			X			
South Dakota					X		
Tennessee		X		X			
Texas	X			X	X	X	
Utah*	X			X	X		
Vermont							
Virginia*				X		X	
Washington				X			
West Virginia							
Wisconsin							
Wyoming							

\* = “High activity” state. See p. 11 for more information.

\*\* = Partially eliminated higher requirements. See state entry.

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## and Two-Parent Families (continued)

Activities, and Services				TANF & Child Support Policy Changes			
	Military Marriage-Related Programs	State Cooperative Extension Programs	Multi-Sector Community Initiatives	Treat 2-Parent and Single-Parent Families the Same	Have Separate 2-Parent State Program	Marriage Incentive	Child Support Arrears Forgiveness
				No Action	***	X	
		X	X	X			
	X	X		**	***	X	
				**			
				**			
				X	X		
	X			X			
				No Action	***		
		X	X	No Action	X	X	X
	X			X	X	X	
		X		X	X		
				X			X
				X	X		
			X	X			
				X		X	
				X			
				X			

## Appendix III: Key Contacts in the Seven “High-Activity” States

State	Name	Title	Organization	Phone	E-mail
Arizona	Mark Anderson	Senator	State Senate	602-926-3160	manderso@azleg.state.az.us
	Jerry Hancock	SSBG Community Planning Coordinator	Department of Economic Security	602-542-6159	jhancock@azdes.gov
Florida	Evelyn Lynn	Senator	State Senate	850-487-5033	lynn.evelyn.web@flsenate.gov
	Jerry Regier	Secretary	Dept of Children & Families	850-487-1111	jerry.regier@myflorida.com
	Richard Albertson	Chairman	Commission on Marriage and Family Support	850-668-3700	richalbert@aol.com
	Karen Murphy	Financial Administrator	Economic Self Sufficiency, Dept. of Children & Families	850-487-2187	karen_murphy@dcf.state.fl.us
	Matthew D. Munyon	Executive Director	Commission on Marriage and Family Support	850-488-4952, ext. 133	mmunyon@ounce.org
Louisiana	Sharon Weston Broome	Speaker Pro Tempore	House of Representatives	225-342-8385	larep29@legis.state.la.us
	Dana Reichert	TANF Director	Division of Administration	225-342-7000	dreiche@doa.state.la.us
	Laura Pease	Family Support Services Manager	Dept. of Social Services	225-342-2514	lpease@dss.state.la.us
	Katherine Spaht	Professor	School of Law, Louisiana State University	225-578-8331	kspaht@lsu.edu
Michigan	Bill Hardiman	Senator	State Senate	517-373-1801	senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov
	Doug Hart	Representative	State House	517-373-0218	dist073@house.mi.gov
	Patricia Caruso	Grant Manager	Michigan Independence Agency	517-373-9889	carusop@michigan.gov
	Mark Eastburg	Director	Pine Rest Family Institute, Grand Rapids	616-455-5279	mark.eastburg@pinerest.org

(as of February 2004)

State	Name	Title	Organization	Phone	Email
Oklahoma	Howard Hendrick	Director	Department of Human Services	405-521-3646	howard.hendrick@okdhs.org
	Mary Myrick	President	Public Strategies Inc., Oklahoma City	405-848-2171	mary@publicstrategies.com
Utah	Melanie Reese	Director	Governor's Commission on Marriage	801-538-1533	mreese@utah.gov
	Glen Jenson	Co-Chair	Commission on Marriage, Utah State University		glenj@ext.usu.edu
	Alan Hawkins	Professor	School of Family Life, Brigham Young University	801-422-7088	hawkinsa@byu.edu
Virginia	Barbara Parker	Program Director	Partners in Prevention, Division of Child and Adolescent Health, Department of Health	804-864-7753	barbara.parker@vdh.va.gov
	Todd Areson	Manager	Program Research and Contracts Division, Division of Child Support	804-726-7412	todd.areson@dss.virginia.gov
	Ron Clark	Director	Virginia Fatherhood Campaign, Department of Health	804-864-7703	ron.clark@vdh.va.gov

Note: In the state profiles (p. 23), these seven “high-activity” states are designated with asterisks.





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1015 15th Street NW, Suite 400  
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202.906.8000 main • 202.842.2885 fax  
[www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org)