

PILOTING A COMMUNITY HEALTHY MARRIAGE INITIATIVE IN FOUR
SITES: MARION COUNTY, INDIANA; CLARK COUNTY, OHIO; LAKEWOOD,
WASHINGTON; YAKIMA, WASHINGTON

OPRE Report # 2012-10

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REPORT

OPRE Report # 2012-10

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Submitted to:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) instituted the Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI) evaluation to document operational lessons and assess the effectiveness of community-based approaches to support healthy relationships, marriages, and child well-being. The evaluation is being conducted by RTI International and The Urban Institute. A component of the CHMI study involved an implementation study on initiatives approved by the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) under authority of Section 1115 of the Social Security Act.¹ The goals of the initiatives were to improve the child support systems through community engagement and healthy marriage and relationship education programs. Operationally, these goals included direct improvements to the child support program, like increasing the number of child support orders established, increasing paternity establishment, and increasing payment toward support obligations. The broader context for these operational goals was improving child well-being and increasing parental responsibility.

This is the final in a series of reports being produced on the implementation of demonstrations in 14 sites receiving grants under the 1115 waivers. Earlier reports covered the implementation of initiatives in Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Jacksonville, Florida; Lexington, Kentucky; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Nampa, Idaho; and New Orleans, Louisiana. This report focuses on the initiatives in Marion County, Indiana; Clark County, Ohio; Lakewood, Washington; and Yakima, Washington. The goal of the implementation studies was to describe the nature of the community initiatives, including recruitment and outreach strategies, targeting efforts, and innovative approaches for linking child support with healthy relationship and marriage support activities. This report examines key aspects of the initiatives' community partnerships, design and implementation of service delivery, and links with child support. It does not present estimates of program impacts or effectiveness. The report is based on site visits conducted in 2010, 3 to 5 years after the initiatives were initially approved as well as information provided over the course of operations by grantees. Because these visits took place when the initiatives were ongoing, this report is not a complete accounting of what the initiatives accomplished or how many people they served over the course of their waivers.

¹ Section 1115 of the Social Security Act authorizes the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to award waivers of specific rules related to state child support programs to implement an experimental, pilot, or demonstration project that is designed to improve the financial well-being of children or otherwise improve the operation of the child support program. The waiver authority allows states to claim federal financial participation (FFP) under Title IV-D of the Act for approved initiatives, but it does not permit modifications in the child support program that would have the effect of placing children in need of support at a disadvantage.

ES.1 Program Models

Applications for CHMI were submitted by the state agency responsible for administering the state's child support program. One of the initiatives in this report (the Ohio initiative) was run by the county child support office, while the others were led by a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a state child support enforcement office. Approved initiative activities received federal matching funds, at a rate of 66 percent. Recipients were required to provide the state's share of funding (34 percent). Funds provided to the state by one or more private, nonprofit foundations counted as state-provided funds for purposes of claiming the match, or federal financial participation (FFP). Between 2005 and 2007, the initiatives described in this report obtained awards equal to the FFP maximum funding caps from \$990,000 to \$1,000,000 over a period of 5 years; however, they did not spend the maximum amount. Over the course of their initiatives, Ohio spent \$592,226, Yakima spent \$973,118, and Lakewood spent \$855,174.² Three of the initiatives ended in June 2011; Indiana's program continues until June 2012.

Each of the applicants applied for and received funding authority on the basis of its specific plan to achieve the healthy marriage and child support objectives. Because the organizations varied in nature and aimed to serve different populations, in terms of both number and demographics, the four initiatives discussed in this report represent a variety of implementation approaches. The initiatives offered various types of healthy relationship programming, including healthy relationship classes held in jails, one-on-one coaching sessions, home visits, and community-based classes. The Office of Child Support Enforcement provided guidance and assistance to support their implementation process and ACF contracted for technical assistance from the Lewin Group during the early period of the waiver demonstrations. This assistance could include strategic help with sources of matching funds, guidance on recruitment and retention of participants, development of management information systems to support tracking and quality improvement, clear guidance about the use of federal funds for faith-based partners, and the development of a domestic violence protocol with input from local domestic violence partners, training opportunities, and guidance for intake procedures.

ES.2 Hoosier Commitment: Marion County, Indiana

Indiana's Healthy Marriage Initiative, known as Hoosier Commitment, is an Indianapolis-based program that provides relationship enhancement and marriage education classes to low-income individuals and couples primarily in Marion County. As noted above, this program is ongoing until June 2012. The classes promote the development of

² The Indiana initiative is ongoing, so final spending figures are not available.

communication, conflict resolution, and financial management skills. The waiver was awarded to the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) and the nonprofit organization the Indiana Family Institute (IFI) in 2007. As of November 2010, DCS had had limited involvement in the initiative; however, the agency was instrumental in facilitating IFI's relationship with the Marion County jail system. In a financially constrained environment, the jail system became the initiative's most powerful partner in reaching the low-income community. Because the jail had its own facilities and there was no need to provide participants with incentives, such as food and transportation, very little overhead was required to hold the classes in the jail. In addition, the jail was interested in bringing programming to inmates that could ease the difficulties associated with reentry. As of April 2011, 535 individuals had taken the classes. Nearly 80 percent of the participants were from the two county jails. IFI also forged partnerships with several nonprofit organizations, including the Indiana Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition (IHMFC), which already had trained facilitators on staff. These trainers currently offer classes in the community to expand access to couples and individuals outside of the jail system.

ES.3 Parents as Partners: Clark County, Ohio

In 2006, Child Support Service of Clark County started Parents as Partners (PAP) to teach healthy relationship skills to families involved in the child support system. The purpose of the PAP program was to help parents work together to raise their children to enhance child well-being and improve child support outcomes. To accomplish this, PAP offered one-on-one coaching sessions to individuals and couples, addressing obstacles to effective communication. Over time, PAP expanded beyond the coaching sessions and offered an adapted version of the relationship skills curriculum to adolescents and ex-offenders in group settings. With more than 18,000 cases, the child support database was an important recruitment tool for the program. The database was used to highlight meetings with new child support cases, or other meetings with parents who may be interested in the PAP program so that staff could describe the program to them in person.

As of March 2011, PAP reached out to more than 600 individuals through the child support system, 338 of whom participated in the program (280 participated as a couple). A total of 376 adolescents and ex-offenders also participated in the program.

ES.4 Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood of Lakewood, Washington

The Washington Department of Social and Health Services served as the fiduciary agent for the waiver awarded in 2005. The Metropolitan Development Council, a community action agency, served as the primary service provider of the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) of Lakewood initiative. These organizations, along with several public

and nonprofit agencies that acted as partners, came together because of the high rates of divorce and births to unmarried parents in Lakewood. HMRP was designed to reach (1) unmarried expectant parents or parents with young children who may or may not be in a relationship with each other, (2) engaged couples, (3) distressed married couples, and (4) separated and divorced couples parenting children. As of December 2010, about 200 individuals had taken relationship skills and fatherhood classes through HMRP, and more people were exposed to healthy relationship material through HMRP's partnerships with other programs. For example, home visitors addressing parenting issues were able to address relationship skills, particularly communication and conflict resolution, as part of their work.

ES.5 Healthy Families Yakima, Washington

Healthy Families Yakima's (HFY's) waiver, awarded in 2005, was designed to create a community-wide focus on children and families and promote a culture that supports and encourages healthy marriages. A primary objective was to identify and expand local resources and services, including premarital preparation and marriage education, so that more couples had access to the knowledge and skills to form and sustain healthy marriages. Responding to high unwed birth rates and divorces involving children in their community, an informal coalition already working together to benefit families, with the City of Yakima as the fiduciary agent, decided to apply for the waiver to deliver more comprehensive relationship-strengthening services because previous efforts aimed at improving family relationships had been disjointed. Five organizations well known in the community provided marriage and relationship education classes to more than 400 participants. These organizations drew on their existing clientele and referral networks to recruit participants. Each was able to serve different segments of the population in need of services, from Spanish speakers to those in their second marriages.

ES.6 Overview of Program Implementation

ES.6.1 Partnerships

The programs employed a common strategy of partnering with nonprofit organizations already established in the community. Establishing this link gave the programs credibility and ready access to clients who could benefit from healthy relationship education. The partnering organizations trained facilitators in the healthy relationship curricula, referred clients, and donated space for classes. For example, in Ohio, a cross referral source was readily available between PAP and other human service agencies also housed within Job and Family Services of Clark County. In Yakima, People for People, a community-based organization that provides transportation services, job training, and other services, trained seven facilitators in the healthy relationship curriculum.

In several instances, partnering with an established nonprofit enabled the programs to reach the Latino community. For example, in Indiana, IFI established a relationship with the Shepherd Community Center, a faith-based organization serving the Latino community. Shepherd saw the value in bringing relationship classes to its clientele and trained two facilitators in the relationship curriculum. In addition, HMRF of Lakewood partnered with Centro Latino, which donated space, enabling several relationship education classes conducted in Spanish to be held at its facilities.

In Indiana, instead of partnering with nonprofit organizations to train facilitators, IFI was able to partner with the IHMFC, which had expertise in conducting relationship enhancement and marriage education classes. By partnering with IHMFC, IFI was able to access trained facilitators and expand the number of relationship classes offered in the community.

HMRF of Lakewood implemented a unique strategy by embedding relationship education into an existing home visiting program run by the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. A number of family support workers were trained in the Family Wellness curriculum and used this knowledge to review portions of the curriculum during home visits with their clients. This partnership enabled relationship education to penetrate the community more broadly by reaching participants in related programs. Otherwise, many of these people would not have taken relationship education classes.

Another way the programs reached individuals who may not otherwise have taken a relationship class was by having the class to count toward some requirement. In Lakewood, HMRF established a relationship with a state- and county-supported transitional housing program. As part of the program, formerly homeless individuals were required to take a certain number of life skills classes. The healthy relationship class was one of the classes that counted toward this requirement.

ES.6.2 Service Delivery

The programs used different curricula, although all employed interactive models and emphasized communication skills that were broadly applicable to participants' lives, not just to their intimate relationships. Two of the four programs—Hoosier Commitment and Healthy Families Yakima—used the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) curriculum, which includes considerable role-playing to give participants a chance to practice the skills they learn, such as how to avoid standoffs and connect with their partner. Staff using the curriculum noted that the speaker-listener techniques resonated most with participants. They also indicated that it is easy to modify the curriculum based on the needs of the particular class. For example, in Indiana, PREP classes taught in the jail needed to be modified because partners did not attend the classes, and role-playing was not always possible in a single-gender class. Similarly, in Yakima, facilitators modified the curriculum to accommodate single parents because the material was geared mainly toward couples.

Most of the service providers using the PREP curriculum condensed it into a day-long session or weekend retreat. For example, in Indiana, IHMFC found that it was easier for participants to give up an entire Saturday than to give up four consecutive Tuesday nights. In Yakima, some service providers held weekend retreats to take people away from the stressors in their environment, enable them to focus entirely on the class, and ensure completion.

In contrast, HMRF of Lakewood used the Family Wellness Associates curriculum called The Strongest Link, which is broken into six 2-hour sessions. The curriculum addressed communications skills, problem solving, personal values and goals and couple goals, money management, intimacy, and spreading of the message to the community. Like PREP, The Strongest Link is interactive with many role-playing activities, so participants practice skills, receive feedback, and gain confidence. HMRF also used a 13-session, 90-minute per session fatherhood curriculum, Quenching the Father Thirst: Developing a Dad, developed by the Urban Fathering Project.

In Ohio, PAP staff members believed that existing curricula needed to be modified in order to resonate with their population. Also, instead of group classes, PAP primarily involved individual and couple coaching sessions. Each of the eight 1-hour coaching sessions had a different area of focus, including communication skills, positive problem solving and conflict resolution, how to discuss financial matters, setting and keeping healthy boundaries, and the value of being involved in their children's lives.

ES.7 Characteristics of Participants

Table ES-1 displays select characteristics of people who participated in the four programs.³ The programs served between approximately 200 and 400 participants as of late 2010 or early 2011. In Ohio and Yakima, men and women were served in similar proportions; whereas Indiana served more men and Lakewood served more women. Except in Yakima, the programs reached mostly less-educated individuals. Most participants in Indiana, Ohio, and Lakewood had no more than a high school degree and few had bachelor's degrees. In contrast, over one third of Yakima participants had at least a bachelor's degree. Yakima also served a higher proportion of married participants and a smaller proportion of participants who were not employed.

³ The characteristics discussed in this section cannot be considered representative of all participants because data were not collected for all participants, since the programs were not over when data were shared and not all of the people who had participated up to that point completed intake surveys. The table shows the proportion of missing data for each characteristic.

ES.7.1 Links with Child Support

Because these initiatives were authorized through Section 1115 Child Support waivers, they were to be designed to improve the financial well-being of children or otherwise improve the operation of the child support program. The agencies aimed to achieve their objectives by using healthy marriage and relationship education as a foundation for improving parental relationships and encouraging greater parental responsibility. The initiatives described in this report varied in their priorities, in the approaches they took to achieving their goals, and the type and level of involvement with local child support partners. At one end of the spectrum, Ohio's PAP program was run by the Clark County child support office and program participants were recruited using the child support database. The program capitalized on parents' existing connection with the child support office. On the other end of the spectrum, the Yakima program primarily worked with the local child support agency as a referral source.

Table ES-1. Number of Participants and Select Participant Characteristics

	Indiana	Ohio	Washington-Lakewood	Washington-Yakima
Number of participants served	385	338	206	400
As of this month	January 2011	March 2011	December 2010	April 2011
Waiver end date	June 2012	June 2011	June 2011	June 2011
Gender				
Male	63%	49%	24%	47%
Female	37%	51%	75%	53%
<i>Missing data</i>	0%	2%	<1%	<1%
Education completed				
Less than high school	25%	22%	40%	7%
High school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED)	34%	43%	25%	19%
Some postsecondary training	30%	29%	30%	39%
Bachelor's degree or higher	11%	7%	4%	36%
<i>Missing data</i>	10%	33%	24%	9%
Employment status				
Not employed	47%	46%	60%	19%
<i>Missing data</i>	17%	14%	6%	16%
Marital status				
Married	35%	13%	20%	80%
<i>Missing data</i>	6%	4%	21%	17%

The other initiatives did not have as close of a connection to child support activities, but they incorporated some basic information about child support into their programming. In Indiana, one of the partnering organizations offered a child support workshop, teaching fathers about establishing paternity, modifying child support, and navigating the judicial process. The child support workshop coordinator provided information to participants in the healthy relationship classes on his organization's services, particularly family court advocacy and the child support workshop. In the fatherhood component of Lakewood's program, the facilitator worked with participants individually before and after group sessions to provide extra support, including assisting with child support paperwork.

To examine the child support involvement of program participants, the participation data was shared with the state child support agencies for matching. This matching was for

research purposes only, and states did not use information received through the match to update their records or for enforcement purposes. Table ES-2 displays the percentage of total program participants who matched in child support administrative records. Except in Yakima, half or more of the participants were involved in the child support system, either as custodial or non-custodial parents. In Indiana and Yakima, high percentages of participants with child support records were custodial parents, but in Lakewood, most were noncustodial parents.

Table ES-2. Child Support Match Information

	Indiana	Ohio	Washington-Lakewood	Washington-Yakima
Percentage of the total number of participants who matched in child support system	50	80	65	21
Percentage of those who matched in the child support system who are custodial parents	84	Not available	21	72

ES.8 Conclusion

The development of the four programs profiled in this report offers a number of perspectives about “bottom-up” healthy marriage programming. While the child support agency submitted the application for all of these demonstrations and Title IV-D Child Support funds paid for all programming, there was considerable variation in the extent to which the state agency or local offices were directly involved. The Ohio demonstration reflects a child support agency in which leaders and staff viewed the provision of relationship education as an integral and beneficial part of their interaction with and service to customers – as an additional tool to meet agency objectives. Although there was not such direct involvement in the other demonstrations, Table ES-2 demonstrates that a substantial number of participants had a connection with the child support system. Future initiatives may want to evaluate the impact of relationship skills programs on child support outcomes across a variety of child support partnership arrangements..

Operationally, a consistent theme across programs was a focus on adapting services to the particular community and responding to the needs of local partnering organizations, fund-raising donors, and participants. Program staff emphasized the importance of coordinating with other groups in the community for referrals and using existing resources, from trained facilitators to free or low-cost facilities. Program staff also pointed to the need to make healthy relationship education resonate with potential funders. Connecting relationship education to issues of importance to the community was essential to securing the match funding necessary to draw down federal child support dollars. Sometimes, it was necessary

to highlight potential benefits of the program beyond strengthening relationships, such as lowering jail/prison recidivism rates through strengthened family relationships. It was also necessary to make relationship education resonate with participants. Program staff noted their belief that adapting the curriculum to make it accessible and relevant to the local population was particularly important.

Overall, the initiatives demonstrate the feasibility of attracting individuals with varied characteristics to take part in a voluntary program teaching relationship skills and of operating such a program with collaboration among community partners.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives and Evaluation

The decline in marriage and associated two-parent families in the United States continues to complicate efforts to reduce child poverty. About 30 percent of all households with children are single-parent households.⁴ In 2009, among female-headed households, about 30 percent were living below the poverty line, compared with only 6 percent of married-couple households.⁵

Evidence from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study revealed that many unmarried parents initially expect to marry but end up not doing so (Gibson, Edin, & McLanahan, 2003). More than 80 percent of unmarried mothers in this study reported living with or being romantically involved with the baby's father at the time of birth and reported a high likelihood of marrying. However, very few of the unwed couples were married 1 year later. Unmarried parents of newborn children cited financial concerns, relationship problems, and timing issues as the most common obstacles to marriage. These and other findings suggest that many couples who have recently had children or who have not yet had children might be influenced by a mix of marriage-related activities and services to improve the long-term stability of their relationships. In addition, meta-analytic reviews of outcomes research have demonstrated a relationship between marriage education and improved relationship quality and stability for married couples (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Reardon-Anderson, Stagner, Macomber, & Murray, 2005). Furthermore, a review of a small number of experimental studies of interventions specifically targeting low-income couples indicated that marriage and relationship education can have small positive effects on relationship quality and communication skills in this population (Hawkins & Ooms, 2010).

Building on research showing links between healthy marriages and relationships and more positive outcomes for children and adults, on average, in 2002 the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), began a program of research and demonstration projects aimed at determining the lessons learned from field demonstrations and, among a smaller set of demonstrations, the effectiveness of offering marriage and relationship skill education services. The focus of the demonstrations has been on teaching individuals and couples the skills shown to be correlated with healthy marriages and relationships. One of the projects that originated from this effort is the Community Healthy Marriage Initiative (CHMI).

As part of CHMI, the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) awarded Section 1115 waivers and funding to state child support enforcement agencies to support local initiatives

⁴ www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2011/tables/11s1336.xls

⁵ www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/incpovhlth/2009/table4.pdf

to develop and provide healthy relationship and marriage services and related activities with the aim of furthering the objectives of the child support program. The goal was to improve the financial well-being of children or otherwise improve the operation of the child support program. Specifically, the initiatives were designed to leverage efforts of local community partners to develop programs that support healthy relationships and marriages; healthy family functioning; and child support enforcement objectives, including parental responsibility and the financial well-being of children. The state child support agencies were responsible for ensuring appropriate use of the Title IV-D federal matching funds by CHMI sites and for overseeing the activities of the local initiatives. All entities funded under the waiver were required to ensure that participation in program services was voluntary and to collaborate with their local domestic violence providers to develop appropriate screening and referral procedures.

The goal of this and prior implementation studies is to describe the nature of CHMI programs, including recruitment and outreach strategies, targeting efforts, and innovative approaches for linking child support with healthy relationship and marriage support activities. This report presents a description of the implementation of Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives in Marion County, Indiana; Clark County, Ohio; Lakewood, Washington; and Yakima, Washington.⁶ The report does not include an assessment of the impacts or effectiveness of program services.

Characterizing the approach in these four initiatives with respect to healthy marriage, healthy family, and child support activities is challenging. Each initiative was distinctive, since each emanated from a participative community process and program structure. In this chapter we provide information on the methodology for this report. Beginning with Chapter 2, each subsequent chapter describes a specific initiative, respectively: Hoosier Commitment in Marion County, Indiana; Parents as Partners in Clark County, Ohio; Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood of Lakewood, Washington; and Healthy Families Yakima, also in Washington.

1.2 Data Collection Methods

To examine how each of the initiatives operated and how each formed and maintained community coalitions, research staff collected information from a variety of sources. The primary qualitative methods included the following:

- semi-structured, in-person interviews conducted during site visits with individuals involved in the support and operation of program activities;

⁶ A series of reports is being produced on the implementation of 14 Section 1115 initiatives. Earlier reports covered the implementation of initiatives in Atlanta, Georgia; Boston, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Denver, Colorado; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Jacksonville, Florida; Lexington, Kentucky; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Nampa, Idaho; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

- ongoing documentation of implementation activities based on regular monthly telephone calls initiated by OCSE/ACF with program staff to provide status updates;
- review of written and audiovisual materials relevant to the planning, implementation, and ongoing operation of the initiatives; and
- group interviews with current and recent participants in sponsored marriage education services.

Teams of two researchers conducted the site visits. The Indiana site visit was conducted in November 2010, the Ohio site visit took place in October 2010, and the Washington site visits were conducted in November 2010. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were completed with a number of individuals involved in each of the projects, from the founding members to the leadership team and direct service providers. In addition, RTI staff interviewed marriage education facilitators and participants to obtain information about the curriculum and classroom dynamics.

Site visitors used prepared discussion guides to conduct the interviews. The semi-structured nature of the interview guides was designed intentionally to allow maximum flexibility in tailoring discussions to the different perspectives of respondents, while still ensuring that key topic areas of interest across initiatives were addressed.

In addition to the site visits, staff reviewed written and audiovisual materials relevant to the planning, implementation, and ongoing operation of the initiatives. Staff also learned about ongoing program activities by participating in monthly project calls led by ACF staff.

Quantitative data on participants came from each program's Management Information System (MIS). Where data were available, tabulations from the MIS provided a quantitative portrait of the demographic characteristics and service use of project participants. Because the data transfer was timed to coincide with our site visits, the tabulations pertain to the subset of participants who were enrolled at that point. All sites continued their activities and as such accumulated more participants. In cooperation with the child support enforcement agencies in Indiana, Ohio, and Washington, the project team obtained information on participants with children who had child support involvement. Again, this match was based on the subset of participants, not the final list of participants.

Much of the information presented in this report is based on the reports and information gathered during the site visits in 2010; however, when available, more recent information is presented. This report provides a snapshot of the constantly evolving and developing community initiatives. Because program operations had not yet ended at the time of the site visits and data collection, the information presented in this report should not be viewed as a full accounting of each initiative's activities.

Each section of the report has a similar structure and addresses the following aspects of each initiative:

- introduction
- program planning and design phase, including child support and other partnerships
- initial operations and services
- child support involvement and other participant characteristics
- conclusions

2. HOOSIER COMMITMENT: MARION COUNTY, INDIANA

2.1 Introduction

Indiana's Healthy Marriage Initiative, known as Hoosier Commitment, is an Indianapolis-based program that provides relationship enhancement and marriage education classes to low-income individuals and couples primarily in Marion County. The classes promote the development of communication, conflict resolution, and financial management skills to enhance family and child well-being by supporting healthy relationships. As of April 2011, 535 individuals had participated in classes. Nearly 80 percent of the participants were from the two county jails. As the program developed and a partnership was established with the Indiana Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition (IHMFC), classes were expanded to the community.

2.1.1 Funding

In October 2007, the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) and the nonprofit organization the Indiana Family Institute (IFI) were awarded a 5-year, federal grant involving matching federal financial participation (FFP) of up to \$990,000 to fund their 1115 waiver proposal to conduct a community healthy marriage initiative (CHMI). Between the application process and the award of the grant, the **governor's** office changed hands. Ultimately, the changes resulted in IFI being tasked with raising the required matching funds on its own. The impacts of the downturn in the economy, combined with the relatively new nature of relationship education services in Indiana, made many potential donors far more reluctant to provide funding than the fundraisers initially anticipated. This setback substantially delayed the progress of the initiative. It was not until 2010 that the program began to offer a number of classes.

2.1.2 Target Population

The target population was low-income individuals and couples in Marion County, which encompasses the city of Indianapolis. Inmates in two county jails were especially targeted for services, because they could be reached conveniently and jail officials were highly interested in exposing inmates to relationship education classes. Nearly all inmates were eligible for participation in the classes in the jail, with the exception of those in segregation for bad behavior. An individual would only be asked to leave the class permanently in the event of an extreme disciplinary problem.

2.1.3 Organizational Structure and Staffing

The only salary financed by the grant was that of the IFI program coordinator. She was responsible for establishing and maintaining partnerships, identifying new referral sources, scheduling the classes and teachers, and maintaining the client intake system. She was also

responsible for fundraising, although IFI's president also assisted with this task. The program coordinator's contract stipulated that she would work on the project 20 hours per week; however, she stated that additional hours were required as the program developed.

2.2 Program Planning and Design Phase

2.2.1 Project Goals and Objectives

Hoosier Commitment came about because, at the time the waiver application was submitted, Marion County ranked last in the state in the percentage of married-couple households and had an unwed birthrate of 48 percent. Recognizing the importance of having two parents involved in children's lives and the fact that no public relationship skills classes were available, IFI and DCS believed that a skills-based training program was needed. The primary goals of the program were to enhance family and child well-being by supporting healthy relationships and encouraging emotional and financial support of children.

2.2.2 Planning and Design Changes

Quarterly during the planning year and occasionally thereafter, IFI, DCS, and their partner organizations met with an advisory council, composed of community-based social services organizations. The purpose was to promote Hoosier Commitment, establish relationships to facilitate referrals, and get feedback on how to administer the program effectively. DCS's involvement in the initiative was limited; however, the agency was instrumental in facilitating IFI's relationship with the Marion County jail system. Because of the program's later than anticipated start, IFI's outreach with community organizations began in 2011. Thus far, the jail system has been the most powerful partner in reaching the low-income community. Because the jail has its own facilities and there was no need to provide participants with incentives, such as food and transportation, very little overhead was required to hold the relationship classes at the jail. In addition, the jail administrator was interested in offering programming to inmates that could ease the difficulties associated with reentry.

Several aspects of the initiative differed from the initial plans. First, services were provided in Marion County, where poverty and unwed birthrates are higher, rather than in both Marion and Hamilton Counties, as originally proposed. Although Marion County was always intended to be the focus, the sponsors initially proposed services for suburban Hamilton County as well, in part to allow comparisons of the effectiveness of services in different communities. However, the staff and partners decided to wait until the program was fully established before expanding to Hamilton County.

Second, the initial plan had envisioned the creation of a referral network of mental health professionals, recruitment and training of mentor couples, and engagement in an extensive

public relations campaign. However, ultimately, the project focused exclusively on providing relationship education classes to address child support goals by strengthening parents' relationships. Further, an initial plan to actively involve county prosecutors in child support cases did not materialize. However, as of 2011, Marion County had a new prosecutor who has expressed interest in involving IFI in a child support modification program.

2.2.3 Key Partners

IFI met regularly with its partners to manage the initiative and determine strategies for assessing its success. IFI sought the Indiana Healthy Marriage and Family Coalition (IHMFC) as a partner because of the organization's expertise in conducting relationship enhancement and marriage education classes. IHMFC is a statewide organization with 200 partners that seeks to promote healthy marriages throughout Indiana. IHMFC is a part of the Indiana Healthy Marriage Initiative, which is funded by the DHHS, ACF, Office of Family Assistance through a separate 5-year grant to conduct marriage preparation courses and relationship building for married couples. Through this grant, IHMFC trained a number of facilitators in various relationship curricula. As part of the CHMI, IFI partnered with IHMFC to access these trained facilitators and expand the number of relationship classes offered in the community. IFI and IHMFC formalized their relationship with a contract in November 2010.

Another partner, the Circle City Fatherhood Coalition (CCFC), is an organization that provides a variety of services to low-income fathers, including job training, family court advocacy, and substance abuse counseling. CCFC also offers a child support workshop, teaching fathers about establishing paternity, modifying child support, and navigating the judicial process. Through the partnership with IFI, CCFC's program coordinator provided information to class participants on the organization's services, particularly family court advocacy and the child support workshop.

More recently, IFI established a relationship with the Shepherd Community Center, a faith-based organization offering a variety of services primarily to the Latino community, including preschool, after-school and summer programs, help with college preparation, and job training and placement assistance. Shepherd was sought as a partner because it is established in the low-income community. Moreover, the organization saw the value in bringing relationship classes to its clientele. Through Hoosier Commitment, two facilitators from Shepherd were trained in the relationship curriculum.

2.3 Initial Operations and Services

2.3.1 Recruitment Strategies

Although initially working primarily with the Marion County jail system, in 2010, IFI began to promote the program through the State's Healthy Families program and the YMCA, which

featured information about the relationship classes in its fall 2010 program booklet. In addition, IFI marketed the program at the DCS Institute for Strengthening Families, a biannual conference that attracts 600 to 700 social workers and other staff from nonprofit organizations. While retaining its original partners, going forward, IFI plans to recruit participants from additional community-based organizations that serve low-income individuals and families, including Wishard Hospital, Head Start centers, and the Marion County Probation Office.

2.3.2 Intake and Screening

IFI was responsible for collecting the intake forms used to compile participant data. The intake form captured demographic information (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, educational level, income), characteristics of the relationship (e.g., length, cohabitation), referral source, and reasons the potential participant was interested in the program, among other information. The form also provided an opportunity to screen for domestic violence. Completing the entire form was not required, but participants were encouraged to complete it. The data were entered into a Microsoft Access database.

IFI developed a domestic violence protocol with the Family Service Association of Central Indiana. If a participant disclosed domestic violence, program staff talked to him or her to determine whether the abuse was ongoing and if the person's participation in the class was in any way manipulated by his or her partner. No one was excluded from participation based on active abuse, but exclusion was possible if staff members believed that it would not be safe for an individual to participate. In addition, all participants were provided with a brochure that included the domestic violence hotline number, places where they could go for assistance (i.e., affiliates of the Indianapolis Domestic Violence Network), and information about abusive behavior and safety planning.

2.3.3 Curriculum and Service Delivery

As of April 2011, 535 people had participated in the relationship education classes through Hoosier Commitment. A total of 421 (79 percent) were served through the two county jails. The vast majority of participants (86 percent) were taught using the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) curriculum. It focused on communication skills, including how partners can address problems, avoid standoffs, and connect with each other instead of pushing each other away. To be counted as having completed the class, participants needed to attend 75 percent of the sessions. Overall, 79 percent of participants completed the class. The classes also incorporated a pre- and post-test, which assessed participants' attitudes about relationships. Items on the measure ranged from how strongly participants agree with statements such as "I believe we can handle whatever conflicts arise in the future" to whether participants have made any changes in their relationships based on what they learned in the class. In addition, participants were asked to fill out a class

evaluation, which, among other things, asked them to rate the facilitator and session content and provide a narrative account of how the workshop made a difference in their lives. Information collected was reported to be helpful for program improvement and local evaluation.

Some classes used the 8 Habits of a Successful Marriage curriculum. This relationship-strengthening program addressed speaker–listener techniques, recognition of unhealthy behaviors, problem solving, and forgiveness, among other skills.

Marion County Jail System

The jail classes involved a total of 8 hours of the PREP curriculum with several modifications. For example, partners did not attend the classes, and role-playing was not always possible or relevant in a single-gender class. In the all-male jail, there was a class offered every month with two 4-hour sessions held 1 week apart. In the mixed-gender jail, male and female classes alternated by month and were held over three sessions. Generally, classes started with 20 to 30 individuals, but occasionally inmates were released before they completed the class.

According to staff, the material engaged participants because of its relevance to many types of relationships, personal and professional. For example, taking time to “cool off” in the face of conflict or using the speaker–listener technique could be readily applied to many circumstances, including in the workplace. Participants commented that they had never thought about relationships in the way they were presented in the class. They reported feeling for the first time that they could see conflicts through their partner’s eyes. Moreover, many mentioned that their partners were encouraged by the fact that they took the class and that the classes could help ease the tensions of reentry. Staff noted that the additional topics on budgeting, opening a bank account, and substance abuse made the curriculum relevant, providing participants with skills they could use once released. Participants who completed the full 8-hour course received a certificate.

Shepherd Community Center

Two facilitators from the Shepherd Community Center were trained in the PREP relationship education curriculum through Hoosier Commitment. At the time data were provided, only eight people had taken the class through Shepherd; however, the organization planned to offer one class per month, alternating between English and Spanish. Shepherd’s classes not only emphasized the relationship between the two partners, but also between parents and their children. The classes were complemented by Shepherd’s one-on-one counseling and home visits to improve parent–child interactions.

IHMFC

As of January 2011, IHMFC had facilitated one weekend marriage education retreat in Tennessee for 52 people (26 couples) from Marion County and several YMCA classes serving a total of 15 people. IHMFC found that many participants preferred covering the entire curriculum in 1 day. Participants found it easier to give up an entire Saturday rather than four consecutive Tuesday nights, for example. Going forward, with the contract between IHMFC and IFI established, IHMFC facilitators will be dispatched to teach classes to participants in various community organizations. In addition to PREP and 8 Habits of a Successful Marriage, IHMFC facilitators were trained in *How to Make Your Good Thing Better*, aimed at African American couples; *Bridal Blessings*, which is specifically for engaged couples; and the Fatherhood And Marriage Leadership Institute's (FAMLI's) *Skills to a Better Relationship*, which also addresses anger management and financial literacy. The facilitators will choose the particular curriculum based on the characteristics of the participants. Working with the community organization, the facilitators will also determine how best to structure the class (e.g., to hold a day-long session or multiple sessions).

2.3.4 Linkages to Other Services

According to program staff, because it is challenging to cover all of the relationship material in the limited time available for the classes, the opportunity to refer participants to other services was rare. Moreover, although facilitators were familiar with the social services available in the community, if asked, they often pointed participants to Indiana's 2-1-1 referral system for the most up-to-date information. In addition, as previously mentioned, participants in the Marion County jail were connected to CCFC's child support workshop and other services for fathers. Shepherd Community Center participants were also able to access the organization's other services, such as job training and placement assistance.

2.3.5 Retention

As of January 2011, the vast majority of individuals who participated in the classes were from the county jails. Thus, retention was not a concern. Generally, if participants were still in jail when subsequent class sessions were held, they continued to participate. As for classes held in the community, providers found that covering the 8-hour curriculum in 1 day, rather than holding multiple sessions, facilitated completion.

2.3.6 Media Campaign and Community Outreach

Hoosier Commitment has not engaged in an extensive public relations campaign. As classes came to be held regularly and in multiple locations, IFI planned to conduct media outreach efforts, including local radio advertisements and television spots, to attract participants as well as funders. An idea under development is a community event based on the television show *Amazing Race* in which participants take part in a number of activities around the

community, emphasizing the importance of partnerships and teamwork. IFI was able to interest several corporate sponsors in helping defray the cost of the event.

2.4 Child Support Involvement and Other Participant Characteristics

2.4.1 Management Information System Data Highlights

The information on participants in this section comes from Hoosier Commitment data entered into the MIS on 385 participants served as of January 2011.⁷ However, the information for each participant is not complete, and the data available may not be representative of all Hoosier Commitment participants. The percentages reported in this section were calculated based on the number of participants who responded to each item on the intake survey, not the total number of participants in the program. Table 2-1 presents tabulations of selected characteristics of participants as of January 2011 along with the number of people who responded to each item on the survey. A majority of the participants for whom data were available were black (61 percent) and male (63 percent). Individuals of varying ages participated; those 41 or older represented the largest single category (37 percent). Participants for whom data were available had low educational attainment; 43 percent failed to earn a regular high school diploma and 11 percent had a bachelor's or higher degree. A slight majority (53 percent) worked part or full time, and the vast majority were low income.

Relationship characteristics are highlighted in Table 2-2. Nearly half of participants in the relationship skills classes and who reported their relationship status were single (48 percent), but more than one in three participants (35 percent) were married. Most participants (44 percent) were in their relationship 1 to 5 years, but a substantial portion (29 percent) were in long-term relationships lasting for over 10 years. A modest percentage of participants (16 percent) who responded to the item about abuse in their relationship indicated that they experienced abuse. The vast majority (80 percent) of participants for whom data were available had children under 18 years of age. Of those with children, just under half had one or two children.

Table 2-1. Selected Characteristics of a Subset of Participants in Hoosier Commitment, January 2011

Characteristics ^a	Percentage of Participants
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⁷ As previously noted, Hoosier Commitment served 535 participants as of April 2011. The demographic information reported in this section, however, only reflects those who participated as of January 2011.

Piloting a Community Healthy Marriage Initiative in Four Sites

Race (<i>n</i> =354)	Black	61
	White	31
	Hispanic	4
	Other	3
	Multiracial	<1
Gender (<i>N</i> =385)	Male	63
	Female	37
Age (<i>n</i> =373)	Under age 20	7
	21 to 25	14
	26 to 30	17
	31 to 35	13
	36 to 40	12
	41 and older	37
Education completed (<i>n</i> =347)	Some high school	25
	General equivalency diploma	18
	High school diploma	16
	Technical or trade school	12
	Some college or 2-year degree	18
	Bachelor's degree	7
	Graduate or professional degree	4
Doctoral degree	<1	
Employment status (<i>n</i> =319)	Not employed	47
	Part time	15
	Full time	38
Income(<i>n</i> =185)	Under \$10,000	37
	\$10,001–\$20,000	19
	\$20,001–\$30,000	12
	\$30,001–\$40,000	10
	\$40,001–\$50,000	5
	\$50,001–\$60,000	3
	\$60,001–\$70,000	2
	Over \$70,000	8

^a The numbers are different in each category because respondents did not complete every item on the survey. In addition, this table only describes those who had participated in the program as of January 2011. This program is still in operation.

Table 2-2. Relationship Characteristics of a Subset of Hoosier Commitment Participants, January 2011

	Characteristics^a	Percentage of Participants
Marital status (<i>n</i> =362)	Single	48
	Married	35
	Divorced	9
	Separated	7
	Widowed	<1
Living with partner (<i>n</i> =298)	Yes	56
	No	44
Relationship length (<i>n</i> =266)	Less than 1 year	12
	1 to 5 years	44
	6 to 10 years	14
	More than 10 years	29
Violence in the relationship (<i>n</i> =332)	No	84
	Yes	16
Have children under 18 (<i>n</i> =304)	No	20
	Yes	80
Number of children (<i>n</i> =304)	0	20
	1	27
	2	22
	3	16
	4	9
	5 or more	6

^a The numbers are different in each category because respondents did not complete every item on the survey. In addition, this table only describes those who had participated in the program as of January 2011. This program is still in operation.

2.4.2 Participant Involvement with Child Support Enforcement System

As shown in Table 2-3, half of Hoosier Commitment's participants had records in child support administrative data. Of those participants who matched, over two thirds had paternity established and 58 percent had multiple child support cases. Most of the active child support orders were under \$200 per month; however, two orders were significantly higher, making the average order \$213 per month. The vast majority of participants (84 percent) had custody of at least one of their children.

Table 2-3. Child Support and Paternity Information for a Subset of Hoosier Commitment Participants, January 2011

Characteristics ^a		Percentage or Number in Each Category
Total number of participants who matched in the child support system		191
Percentage of the total number of participants that matched in child support system (<i>N</i> =385)		50%
Does the participant have multiple child support cases? (<i>n</i> =191)	Yes	58%
	No	42%
Established paternity for all cases (<i>n</i> =512)	Paternity established	68%
	Paternity not established	32%
For participants with an active child support order, court-ordered payment amount (<i>n</i> =100)	\$1–\$100 monthly	12%
	\$101–\$200 monthly	53%
	\$201–\$300 monthly	18%
	\$301–\$400 monthly	6%
	\$401–\$500 monthly	4%
	\$501–\$600 monthly	5%
>\$601 monthly		2%
Average monthly child support order obligation of active child support cases (<i>n</i> =113)		\$213.27
Percentage of participants who are custodial or noncustodial parents (<i>n</i> =191)	Both ^b	26%
	Custodial parent	58%
	Noncustodial parent	16%

^a This table only describes those who had participated in the program as of January 2011. This program is still in operation.

^b Some parents have custody of one or more of their children and are noncustodial parents of other children. The subset of participants includes those enrolled as of January 2011.

2.5 Conclusion

Hoosier Commitment brought relationship enhancement and marriage education classes to over 500 individuals, the majority of whom participated while in jail. The partnership with the Marion County jail illustrates the importance of coordinating with other groups and making marriage and relationship enhancement resonate with the community. IFI leveraged existing resources, from using low- or no-cost facilities like the jails to identifying facilitators that IHMFC had already trained. Because reentry issues seemed to be increasingly important in their community, IFI was able to attract potential funders who were not specifically interested in funding relationship education simply for the sake of improving marriages. Consequently, IFI highlighted the skills former inmates reentering the public

gained from the courses, including the potential to lower recidivism rates. In addition, the relationship skills programs have attracted participants with connection to the child support system; half of participants have some involvement with the system and about one in four have an active payment obligation. Connecting relationship education to issues of importance to the community was essential to securing the match funding necessary to draw down federal funding.

At the time of the site visit in November 2010, IFI's main concern was raising \$350,000 over the next 2 years to sustain the program. Staff hoped that, as the economy strengthened, private donors and other organizations would be willing to increase their support of the program. In addition, IFI staff expressed their interest in working more closely with the state child support office. Building from the relationship education work that emphasizes parenting and parental responsibility and making class participants aware of the Circle City Fatherhood Coalition's child support workshop, IFI would like to help participants to have orders modified to reflect their ability to pay and reduce unrecoverable debt so current support obligations can be met. In Indiana, child support forgiveness requires a signed order from the governor or attorney general. In the future, IFI staff members hope that the program will be strengthened with more active support and participation from the state to ensure that parents are in a strong position to meet their current obligations.

3. PARENTS AS PARTNERS: CLARK COUNTY, OHIO

3.1 Introduction

In 2006, the Child Support Services of Clark County started Parents as Partners (PAP) to teach healthy relationship skills to families involved in the child support system. The purpose was to help parents work together to raise their children in order to enhance child well-being and improve child support outcomes. To accomplish this, PAP offered one-on-one coaching sessions to individuals and couples, addressing obstacles to effective communication. Over time, PAP expanded beyond the coaching sessions and offered an adapted version of the relationship skills curriculum to adolescents and ex-offenders in group settings. As of March 2011, the program had served 338 people in individual and couple coaching sessions and an additional 376 adolescents and ex-offenders in group settings.

3.1.1 Funding

PAP received approval for a 5-year, \$1 million waiver for a CHMI in March 2006. It received matching funding of \$500,000 from a local private philanthropy and began delivering services in the fall of 2006. Over the course of the initiative, PAP spent \$592,226 in Title IV-D federal matching funds.

3.1.2 Target Population

PAP targeted families involved with the child support system, generally during one of their initial visits to the Child Support Office. Staff stated that these parents could benefit from the program because many were raised in families in which the standard response to conflict was to leave instead of talking through problems. Moreover, parents were hard-pressed to find examples of healthy relationships outside their own families given Clark County's high divorce rate. In an attempt to reverse trends in the area, PAP provided support and encouragement for parents to start and complete the program. Participation could also lead to mitigation of some enforcement measures in some cases. For example, if child support staff thought a parent who fell behind on child support payments was actively participating in the program and making efforts to become a better parent and take responsibility for his/her child support obligations, the Child Support Office might not utilize some of the more debt-driven enforcement measures, such as license suspension, passport denial, and legal action, in order to encourage positive parental involvement and reliable payment of current child support obligations.

3.1.3 Organizational Structure and Staffing

The program was staffed by two primary facilitators and a supervisor. The facilitators were hired after the planning phase to identify a curriculum and conduct relationship education

coaching sessions. These two facilitators, a man and woman, routinely worked together with couples and single parents. To maintain the co-facilitator model, the supervisor provided back-up, as needed, if one of the facilitators was unavailable for a session. One of the facilitators previously worked as a case manager for the county mental health department. Given his personal experience as a father in the local child support system, he was also able to serve as a resource to fathers who had questions about child support. The other facilitator previously worked with Clark County's *Help Me Grow* program, which aids pregnant and parenting mothers. During her monthly home visits in that program, she offered support and connected underserved mothers to resources to help them provide for their young children. One of the facilitators handled the database entry and management.

3.2 Program Planning and Design Phase

Prior to being awarded the grant, the Clark County Child Support Office conducted planning work with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to determine how to best structure a relationship skills program because the office did not have prior experience with such programs. Of particular concern was staffing the program and recruiting participants. An administrator, who had worked for the Child Support Office for more than 10 years and with Job and Family Services of Clark County for 20 years, supervised the planning work.

The planning period helped the administrator determine that focusing recruitment on people involved with the Child Support Office was best. Initially, the project team considered recruiting parents in the hospital following the birth of their child; however, they questioned whether the program would resonate in an environment with so few parents married at the time of the birth of their child and in which the father may be absent or even unknown. Instead, focusing recruitment efforts on the child support caseload seemed more promising, because it contained 18,000 active cases with paternity established. The child support database was useful in highlighting new cases or others scheduled for meetings at which staff could present the program to relevant families.

3.2.1 Project Goals and Objectives

PAP aimed to help parents understand the importance of working together to raise their children, thereby improving child well-being. In addition, by promoting better communication and reducing strain between parents, PAP hoped to improve child support outcomes, such as more regular payments. And for some families, PAP's goal was to eliminate the need for child support altogether by helping them achieve stable, joint households, either as married or cohabiting couples.

3.2.2 Key Partners

Though the program was solely administered by the Clark County Child Support Office, PAP partnered with other organizations to expand its reach beyond the one-on-one sessions with

individuals and couples involved with the child support system. After presenting information about PAP at the Partners' Council, a monthly meeting of various local social services agencies, PAP staff received requests from the community for their services. As a result, PAP partnered with the Graduation, Reality and Dual Role Skills (GRADS) county high school program, which aims to keep pregnant and parenting teens in school and delay subsequent pregnancies; the Learning Opportunities Center (LOC) alternative high schools; and the Opportunities for New Directions (OND) program for ex-offenders offered by the Opportunities Industrialization Center of Clark County. These partnerships enabled PAP to serve adolescents and ex-offenders in group settings.

3.3 Initial Operations and Services

3.3.1 Recruitment Strategies

PAP's primary source for new participants was the child support caseload, which was facilitated by using the agency database to identify new cases and new meetings at which the program could be presented. On average, 200 new child support cases entered the system each month; roughly three fourths were eligible to participate in the program. People were *not* eligible if they were in jail, they lived out of state, their child was in the care of a nonparent, or the father could not be located. Initial reactions from some of those who were eligible for the program were not positive. Some had difficulty trusting that an agency that they knew as focused on enforcement and collection could be a resource for strengthening family relationships. One-on-one recruitment and coaching were effective at minimizing this concern.

Although the bulk of participants came from the child support caseload, facilitated by the database, word of mouth was also important. The program received referrals from former participants and other county agencies, including those that investigate child abuse and administer public benefits (e.g., cash assistance, food, medical coverage). Participation in PAP for parents being investigated for abuse or neglect was sometimes incorporated as part of the plan for them to regain or retain custody of their children.

PAP also received some referrals from the Marriage Resource Center, a private organization that provided services similar to PAP, although its services were predominantly faith based. Marriage Resource Center staff referred potential participants who were interested in taking a secular relationship skills class to PAP.

3.3.2 Intake and Screening

For one-on-one component of PAP, facilitators met with prospective participants in person or sent them information on the program. In most cases, facilitators reached out to parents during their first or second visit to the Child Support Office because in-person contact was

more successful than contact by phone or mail. The facilitators typically made initial contact while parents waited for a child support establishment hearing or genetic testing procedure.

PAP staff screened potential participants for domestic violence, determining on a case-by-case basis whether they could participate in the program or needed to be referred to another organization for assistance. Staff discussed domestic violence cases with the couples' social worker and followed court recommendations, if available. Depending on the couples' history, the facilitators worked with the individuals separately before conducting sessions with both parents.

3.3.3 Curriculum and Service Delivery

The curriculum used by PAP was unique to the program. Staff members believed that existing curricula would not resonate with the Clark County population and decided to develop their own. They adapted existing curricula, including Michigan State University Extension's Caring for My Family and FranklinCovey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families, to make them more relevant to the local population, which was largely low income and Caucasian. Caring for My Family is available at no cost, and permission to copy and use it is granted for nonprofit educational purposes. Funding for developing this curriculum was provided by an ACF OCSE Special Improvement Project grant. PAP used this curriculum to develop its conceptual framework and also incorporated some terminology from *7 Habits* because other Clark County human service programs were already using that curriculum. The PAP curriculum consisted of eight 1-hour coaching sessions for individuals and couples. The first session focused on factors that participants bring to a relationship that could affect their current relationship, such as their background and family values. Later sessions presented communication skills, positive problem solving and conflict resolution, money management and how to discuss financial matters, setting and keeping healthy boundaries, and the value of being involved in their children's lives. The final session addressed the importance of commitment, either committing to each other or to being an involved parent. The facilitators did not necessarily focus on marriage but discussed various relationship options, ranging from co-parenting to marriage. The facilitators adapted their training based on the personal goals of the participants.

The facilitators stated that they used a relaxed, flexible approach to encourage participants to share their thoughts and feelings. Rather than lecturing, they shared stories to help participants feel more comfortable talking about personal issues. The co-facilitation model with a man and a woman also promoted participation by providing each parent with someone to relate to.

Ninety days after program completion, the facilitators made an effort to follow up with the 41 percent of participants who completed at least five sessions. The facilitators made a second follow-up attempt at the 6-month mark if they were able to reach participants at the

initial follow-up. During these contacts, they asked general questions about the family's well-being, probing to see if they could help with anything that changed since the participants completed the program. Information obtained during follow-up was recorded in **participants' case files**. In addition, 60 participants (18 percent) ended up completing additional sessions after completing the program. In these sessions, facilitators reviewed course material specific to the issue the couple faced.

PAP facilitators also led classroom sessions for high school students on communication and anger management skills, setting of boundaries, and the importance of paternity establishment (for those who already had children), using the same basic curriculum used for adults. Twenty-eight teens in the GRADS program and 20 students at the Learning Opportunities Center (LOC) had participated in the program as of March 2011. The LOC students earned a half-credit for their participation as part of a life skills class. In addition, PAP educated ex-offenders on relationship skills, child support issues, visitation, and custody, serving 328 of these participants as of March 2011.

3.3.4 Linkages to Other Services

PAP staff referred participants to numerous community, county, and state agencies, including some that, like PAP, were housed within Job and Family Services of Clark County (JFSCC). The JFSCC agencies were not only co-located but also served similar populations and had related missions. PAP participants were referred to "Work Plus" a one-step center for job and workforce development services, as well as to "Benefits Plus" which helped parents determine whether they were eligible for a variety of public benefits and provided help with the enrollment process. In the community, PAP referred participants to low- or no-cost mental health services. According to program staff, because sessions were one-on-one, they could gain a greater understanding of participants' underlying needs than would have been possible in other settings.

3.3.5 Retention

Because coaching sessions were spread over 8 weeks, participants sometimes had trouble finishing the program. Participants completed the program if they attended at least five sessions. Overall, 41 percent of participants completed at least five sessions in the program.

The PAP facilitators used various means to encourage participants to complete the program. If a couple stopped attending sessions, facilitators followed up with them to attempt to resume the coaching. Occasionally, sessions were scheduled in a couple's home if transportation was a barrier. Also, as previously mentioned, to encourage retention and ultimately promote regular payment of current support, those participating in PAP could possibly face less debt-driven enforcement measures because they were making efforts to improve their parenting and take responsibility for their child support obligations.

3.3.6 Media Campaign and Community Outreach

PAP was featured in advertisements on television and radio. The program was also highlighted in the local paper. During Child Support Awareness Month, PAP staff members conducted extensive community outreach. They attended multiple health fairs and community events, including the "Social Services 101" event, a human service agency fair. PAP also maintained a website.

3.4 Child Support Involvement and Other Participant Characteristics

3.4.1 Management Information System Data Highlights

PAP maintained a database entry for every person the facilitators contacted, even if the person was only a potential participant. The data described here include PAP participant data entered into the MIS between July 2006 and March 2011. These data only include people who participated in the coaching sessions, not the high school students and ex-offenders reached in group settings. During this period, PAP facilitators reached out to 601 people through the child support system. Three hundred thirty-eight individuals participated in the one-on-one coaching sessions. Tables 3-1 through 3-4 display select characteristics of these 338 individuals. The percentages reported in this section are calculated based on the number of participants who responded to each item on the intake survey, which in some cases is a subset of participants in the program because not all participants responded to every item.⁸ The tables show the number of people who responded to each item.

Participation rates are highlighted in Table 3-1. Forty-two percent of people with whom PAP staff established contact either completed or were still participating in the program when data were collected. In addition, 18 percent of participants elected to complete additional sessions beyond the standard eight sessions. Of the 189 participants who failed to complete the program and for whom data were available, most (72 percent) failed to show up for sessions and did not respond to efforts to contact them.

Table 3-2 displays selected characteristics of the subset of PAP participants who completed items on the intake survey. Men and women participated in the program in nearly equal numbers. This subset of participants was predominately White (84 percent). The age range of participants was normally distributed, with about half falling between 25 and 34. People of varying levels of educational attainment participated in PAP. Nearly four fifths of participants for whom data were available earned at least a high school diploma or GED, including 29 percent with some college or a 2-year degree. At the other ends of the

⁸ When incomplete, the data available are not representative of all PAP participants.

spectrum, high school dropouts accounted for approximately one fifth of participants and those with a bachelor's degree or higher made up 7 percent. Approximately half of participants for whom data were available indicated that they work, although more than one quarter reported that their household income was less than \$10,000 over the past 12 months. Overall, 9 out of 10 participants reported earning less than \$30,000 in the past year.

Table 3-1. Program Participation in Coaching Sessions, March 2011

Program Participation ^a		Percentage or Number in Each Category
Number of people PAP staff reached out to		601
Number of participants		338
Participation status (<i>N</i> =338)	Completed	39%
	Currently participating	4%
	Discontinued	57%
Number of classes completed (<i>N</i> =338)	1 session	28%
	2-4 sessions	31%
	5 or more sessions	41%
Percentage of participants who completed extra sessions (more than 8) (<i>N</i> =338)		18%
Reasons participants did not complete the program (<i>n</i> =189)	No longer interested	12%
	Relationship ended	8%
	No show/No response	72%
	Time conflict	1%
	Violence in the relationship	3%
	Moved	3%

^a This table only includes those who had participated in the program as of March 2011.

Regarding their relationships, the vast majority of participants were never married, as shown in Table 3-3. Although only 13 percent of participants were married, 41 percent reported living with a partner. Most participants (82 percent) attended the coaching sessions with their partner.

Table 3-2. Selected Characteristics of a Subset of Participants in Parents as Partners, March 2011

Characteristics^a		Percentage or Number in Each Category
Sex (<i>n</i> =331)	Male	49%
	Female	51%
Race (<i>n</i> =327)	White	84%
	Black or African American	13%
	Asian	1%
	Hispanic/Latino/Spanish	1%
	Other	1%
Client age (<i>n</i> =319)	Under age 20	2%
	Between 20 and 24	22%
	Between 25 and 34	51%
	Between 35 and 44	14%
	Age 45 and older	12%
Average age of client (<i>n</i> =319)		30
Education completed (<i>n</i> =277)	8th grade or less	1%
	Some high school	21%
	High school diploma	31%
	GED	11%
	Some college/2-year degree	29%
	Bachelor's degree/tech or trade school	5%
	Graduate school	2%
Employment status (<i>n</i> =291)	Full-time job (at least 35 hours per week)	38%
	Part-time job (1 to 34 hours per week)	13%
	Temporary/seasonal work	3%
	Self-employed/business owner	1%
	Not employed	46%
Household income for the past 12 months? (<i>n</i> =280)	No income	34%
	<\$5,000	14%
	\$5,000–\$10,000	14%
	\$10,001–\$15,000	8%
	\$15,001–\$20,000	11%
	\$20,001–\$30,000	13%
	\$30,001–\$40,000	4%
	Over \$40,000	4%

^a The numbers are different in each category because respondents did not complete every item on the survey. In addition, this table only describes those who had participated in the program as of March 2011.

Table 3-3. Relationship Characteristics of a Subset of Parents as Partners Participants, March 2011

Characteristics ^a		Percentage
Marital status (<i>n</i> =325)	Married, not separated	13
	Divorced/legally separated	9
	Never married	78
Living arrangement (<i>n</i> =327)	Living together	41
	Living apart	58
	Homeless	1
Class participation status (<i>n</i> =338)	Participating as a couple	83
	Participating single	17

^a The numbers are different in each category because respondents did not complete every item on the survey. In addition, this table only describes those who had participated in the program as of March 2011.

3.4.2 Participant Involvement with Child Support Enforcement System

As shown in Table 3-4, 80 percent of participants had a record in the child support system, with 60 percent having an active child support order as of March 2011. Of the child support orders currently active, three quarters were being paid. Of those, 37 percent were being paid as ordered in full, and 38 percent were being paid but not the full amount due.

Table 3-4. Child Support Information for a Subset of Parents as Partners Participants, March 2011

Characteristics ^a	Percentage or Number in Each Category	
Total number of participants who matched in the child support system	269	
Percentage of the total number of participants who matched in child support system (<i>N</i> =338)	80%	
Status of child support orders as of 3/31/11 (<i>N</i> =338)	No order	20%
	Order active	60%
	Order inactive	20%
For participants with an active child support order, payment status as of 3/31/11 (<i>n</i> =182)	Paying as ordered	37%
	Paying, not as ordered	38%
	Not paying/arrears	25%

^a This table only describes those who had participated in the program as of March 2011.

3.4.3 Perspectives of Selected Participants

To gauge the perspectives of selected participants, the evaluation team interviewed four program participants—one couple and two individuals. These participants were selected by the program to represent single, married, male, and female perspectives as much as possible in a very small sample. Only one of the participants had not completed the program at the time of the interview. These participants came to PAP for different reasons. One participant reported that the father of her son learned of the program and wanted to participate because he thought it would help them get back together. The participant said she did not want to resume the relationship but agreed to attend the sessions because she wanted to be able to communicate more effectively with the father for the sake of the child. The father later dropped out of the program, but she completed it as an individual. The couple interviewed by the evaluation team came into the program after seeing an advertisement because their marriage was deeply troubled. They stated that they were committed to making their marriage work but did not have the tools to deal with trust issues. A third participant came into the program through the GRADS program she completed in high school.

All of the participants said they did not know what to expect of PAP programming. The couple, however, was put at ease when they discovered that the sessions were facilitated jointly by a man and a woman—they said this helped them feel that neither of them would be “ganged up on.” Initially, one of the participants felt apprehensive about taking the class because she thought it would be an attempt to pull her back into a relationship she was no longer interested in, as she experienced in marriage counseling. Despite her inhibitions, she decided to participate in PAP because she thought it would help with co-parenting issues. She reported that she found the class very helpful, and, although her co-parent did not complete it, she did. Although they did not complete the sessions together, she reported that she learned principles that she would use in her relationships.

The four participants interviewed said they learned a lot from the program. One participant stated that she previously had no idea what constituted a healthy relationship; the program helped her see what was unhealthy and taught her how to establish boundaries. She also learned that communicating about uncomfortable topics is important. She credited the program with helping her focus on slowing down and trying to understand where someone else is coming from. She said she has learned to diffuse situations by saying, “I don’t understand what you’re doing, so can we talk about this?”

The couple reported that their biggest lesson learned was learning how to fight fairly. Although they were still working on not fighting in front of the kids, they reported having less to fight about because they were able to resolve some disagreements. Learning how to disagree in a constructive manner was also helpful to the participant who came through the

GRADS program. She also reported learning the importance of not fighting in front of her child.

The four participants remarked on how well the facilitators were able to create a nonjudgmental, calm, and comfortable atmosphere to work through difficult, personal issues. As one participant said, "The facilitators are professional, but not so professional that it puts you on edge." Another participant described them as down-to-earth people, not "shrinks." The facilitators never said "time is up," and they were able to adjust the program to what participants needed without pressure to stay on topic. According to one participant, he and his spouse were able to walk away feeling like they really accomplished something. The couple noted that the year since completing the program was the healthiest period in the history of their relationship.

Several noted that the program was helpful, not only in dealing with relationship issues, but also with issues outside of the relationship. One participant noted that PAP "gives her the information to do what she needs to do." The program has helped other participants find a reference or referral for things they needed (e.g., legal help, counseling, transportation). These participants also expressed gratitude that PAP services were free.

3.5 Conclusion

PAP sought to enhance couples' communication skills as they entered the child support system to promote family well-being, increase compliance with child support orders, and potentially end the need for child support involvement if the couple married or lived together. Operating out of the Office of Child Support provided opportunities for recruiting participants and incentivizing participation. However, as noted above, some people had difficulty trusting that the Child Support agency that they viewed as focused on enforcement would provide them with helpful services.

Despite challenges, PAP staff members touted the program's one-on-one coaching model, because it made participants more comfortable sharing sensitive information about their relationship and family background. Staff, as well as the four participants interviewed, stated that the story-sharing approach used by facilitators and the fact that both a man and woman served as facilitators encouraged participation. Staff also stressed the importance of using a curriculum relevant to the local population.

Moving forward, PAP staff would like to get more involved with prisoner reentry, because many people leave jail with child support debt and may be receptive to a program that can help them meet their current child support responsibilities and manage arrears. Another possibility is establishing a mentoring program, in which couples who have already been through the program work with couples just beginning the program. In addition, PAP staff would like to hire a Spanish-speaking caseworker given a recent rise in Spanish-speaking

households. Though the program was in the last year of its waiver at the time of the site visit, the staff and partners were committed to securing funding and continuing the program because they viewed it as a holistic, family-centered way of furthering the Office of Child Support's goals.

4. Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood of Lakewood, Washington

4.1 Introduction

Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood (HMRF) of Lakewood was a public–private partnership to provide relationship skills and fatherhood education in the community. The Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) served as the fiduciary agent, a local community action agency managed service delivery, and several public and nonprofit agencies acted as partners. These organizations came together because of the high rates of divorce and births to unmarried parents in Lakewood. As of December 2010, 206 participants had taken the relationship classes.⁹ HMRF also sought to embed information about healthy relationships into existing programs to expand its reach in the community.

4.1.1 Funding

HMRF received a matching grant with a funding cap of \$1 million. Over the course of the initiative, HMRF spent \$855,174. Implementation of the initiative began in 2006; however, DSHS could not significantly draw down federal funds for HMRF until mid-2008. HMRF had difficulty securing match funding because marriage education was new to the community and many did not know what it was and was not. For example, HMRF staff had to address concerns raised by some community organizations that the initiative would encourage women to stay in unhealthy relationships by emphasizing the focus on providing education about healthy relationships and marriages. A number of faith-based organizations were very interested in the program but were not in a position to help fund it. Ultimately, HMRF was able to identify sufficient in-kind contributions, such as volunteer labor and facilities, to meet the match requirement and draw down the bulk of its federal funding.

4.1.2 Target Population

HMRF of Lakewood was designed to reach (1) unmarried expectant parents or biological parents of young children who may or may not be in a relationship with each other, (2) engaged couples, (3) distressed married couples, and (4) separated and divorced couples parenting children. The social services agencies that became HMRF partners already worked with families in these circumstances. These agencies found that, regardless of family status, many of the people they served were living in poverty and their limited resources put a strain on their family and couple relationships.

⁹ According to a report prepared for HMRF by independent consultants, 376 individuals participated by the time the program ended in June 2011.

4.1.3 Organizational Structure and Staffing

HMRF staffing fluctuated over the waiver period, ranging from approximately 1.3 to 2.75 full-time equivalents. The initiative was overseen by co-directors, one of whom focused on applying for the waiver and previously ran a fatherhood program for 5 years. The other director joined the program when the waiver was awarded and combined administrative functions with teaching marriage and relationship education classes. He previously spent 15 years working with families, specializing in counseling for members of the military with post-traumatic stress disorder. Accordingly, he had a strong relationship with the military community in the area. By the third year of the waiver, HMRF was able to hire a fatherhood program coordinator. In addition, a program administrator was responsible for entering the information from the intake forms into the MIS.

HMRF also trained 20 people in the healthy relationship curriculum to become workshop facilitators. Most of the facilitators worked in area family support centers. Other facilitators, including representatives from the Puyallup Indian Tribe, Korean Women's Association, and a Seattle fatherhood program, were trained to use the curriculum in their work with a broader, more diverse population.

4.2 Program Planning and Design Phase

DSHS submitted a waiver application for a CHMI in 2003 and identified the Metropolitan Development Council (MDC), a community action agency, as the primary service provider. MDC had past experience working with the local Division of Child Support (DCS) on fatherhood projects, including another child support waiver, "Devoted Dads," that promoted fathers' involvement in the financial and emotional support of their children. MDC also had collaborative relationships with many other community organizations, through its participation in the Lakewood Community Partners Collaboration. This coalition of more than 75 stakeholders, included representatives of city and county government, human services organizations, faith-based organizations, and businesses, who were meeting monthly to discuss community needs and share information about services available in the community to promote children's healthy development. Based on their related work, relationship with DCS, and connections in the community, DSHS considered MDC well positioned to develop a healthy marriage initiative.

The waiver was awarded in 2005. During the time between the waiver application and award, MDC was part of a coalition of primarily faith-based organizations, including about six churches and the chaplaincy of the two military installations in the area, brought together by a Compassion Capital Fund grant awarded to Lakewood Baptist Church. This grant enabled the coalition to begin to build capacity for a community-wide marriage initiative. However, over time, some of MDC's relationships with faith-based organizations

weakened because of changes in personnel. Thus, over time, the focus of the project shifted from less emphasis on marriage to a focus on the relationship education in broader terms.

4.2.1 Project Goals and Objectives

The goals of the initiative were to educate the community about the importance of healthy marriage and how it benefits children, increase paternity establishment and child support compliance, improve father-child and father-mother relationships, and increase marriage stability and satisfaction. These goals were identified because Lakewood-area children are at high risk of living in a single-parent home. Between 1990 and 2000, the city's birthrate to unmarried women jumped 14 percentage points to 41 percent, nearly 13 percentage points higher than the rate for Washington State as a whole. In addition, the rate of children living in Pierce County, where Lakewood is located, who experienced divorce rose from 8 percent to 55 percent between 1990 and 2000. During this time period, 26 percent fewer couples got married in the county.

4.2.2 Planning and Design Changes

Originally, HMRF planned to train couples in the community to serve as mentors and lead healthy marriage activities within their faith communities. However, because it was difficult for the initiative to secure match funding, it was unable to pay a stipend to the couples. As a result, this particular activity never materialized.

4.2.3 Key Partners

HMRF of Lakewood partnered with local family support centers, a Latino community organization, and a transitional housing program. HMRF's strategy was to embed relationship education into existing programs and services to extend its reach into the community.

HMRF's main partnership was with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, which oversees family support centers, offering home visiting programs, parenting education classes, parent support groups, parent and child activities, life skills training, family counseling, and information and referral services. MDC has a contract with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to run family support centers in Lakewood and Tacoma. MDC's Lakewood family support center is located in the same facility as HMRF. In addition, one of HMRF's directors has a long-standing relationship with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, having previously supervised family support workers and conducted support groups for family support workers experiencing vicarious trauma. Drawing on these relationships and the family support supervisor's support for relationship education and its fit with the work that family support workers already do, the program trained a number of family support workers in the Family Wellness Associates curriculum. In fact, the majority of people HMRF trained in the curriculum were family support workers. In addition to those

fully trained in the curriculum, all of the family support workers in Pierce County received an overview of the curriculum, highlighting the communication and conflict resolution skills that are most relevant to the families they serve, and handouts to share with families.

Family support workers reviewed portions of the relationship education curriculum with their clients during home visits. Providing education on early childhood development and parenting offers family support workers various avenues to address relationship education as well. For example, the family support workers can discuss how raising young children can stress the parents' relationship, or they can address the importance of both parents employing similar parenting techniques and resolving differences. According to HMRF's co-director, the partnership with the Family Support Centers enabled relationship education to penetrate the community broadly because people who would not have taken relationship education classes were exposed to the curriculum through a program they already used.

HMRF also partnered with Centro Latino, a community organization that provides youth, family outreach, employment, and education services to the local Latino community. This organization donated space, enabling several relationship education classes conducted in Spanish to be held at its facilities.

Finally, HMRF established a relationship with a state- and county-supported transitional housing program run by MDC, which serves formerly homeless, single-parent families. As part of the program, participants are required to take a certain number of life skills classes before transitioning to independent, subsidized housing. Through the partnership, the relationship skills class was one of the classes that counted toward this requirement (based on voluntary enrollment). Several classes were held at the transitional housing facility.

4.3 Initial Operations and Services

4.3.1 Recruitment Strategies

Most people were referred to relationship education through the local Division of Child Support. HMRF also received referrals from a variety of community agencies, because the initiative was widely known in the human service community as a result of MDC's involvement in the Lakewood Community Partners Collaboration, the coalition of community stakeholders discussed in Section 4.2. Other referral sources included the 2-1-1 referral hotline, the county marriage license bureau, and word of mouth.

4.3.2 Intake and Screening

The intake form captured demographic information about the participants (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, language, educational level, income), characteristics of their relationship and family structure (e.g., whether their partner is participating in the program, whether they have children), and how the individual found out about the program.

As part of the initial screening interview, all participants were asked about violence in their relationships. All staff and volunteers associated with HMRF were required to complete training on domestic violence. Among other things, they learned how to respond to a positive domestic violence screen, including assessing the individual's immediate safety needs and providing referrals to appropriate services. The domestic violence protocol was designed to ensure that domestic violence within families served by HMRF was routinely and safely identified and appropriately addressed. Because the relationship education offered by HMRF was based on the notion that both parties in the relationship have equal power and are equally committed to having a healthy relationship, the protocol acknowledged that it was not appropriate for couples experiencing domestic violence to participate in the classes. The protocol was approved by a team, which included members from the Pierce County Commission against Domestic Violence, the local police department, and the Tacoma Pierce-County Health Department.

4.3.3 Curriculum and Service Delivery

Most of HMRF's relationship education classes were held at the community center where MDC is housed. In addition, as previously mentioned, several classes were held at Centro Latino and the transitional housing facility. Over the course of the waiver period, about 30 relationship education classes took place. Each class ranged from 6 to 22 people. Approximately 65 percent of those who started taking the classes ultimately completed the program by completing four of the six sessions.

HMRF used the Family Wellness Associates curriculum called The Strongest Link. This curriculum included six weekly 2-hour sessions addressing communication skills, problem solving, personal values and goals and couple goals, money management, intimacy, and spreading of the message to the community. The sessions were designed to be interactive with many role-playing activities, so participants practiced skills, received feedback, and gained confidence. Participants also received homework to reinforce the material reviewed during class.

In addition, HMRF also offered fatherhood classes, which generally had 5 to 10 participants. Participants needed to complete at least 10 of the 13 sessions to be counted as completing the fatherhood program. The fatherhood classes, as well as a support group, took place weekly. Men could attend the class and/or the support group. The class used the curriculum *Quenching the Father Thirst: Developing a Dad*, developed by the Urban Fathering Project. This curriculum was specifically designed for fathers in urban, low-income communities who face multiple challenges. It is culturally relevant, addresses real-life issues, and engages all learning styles and fathering situations (e.g., teen, single, married, divorced, noncustodial, step, father figures). The support group provided an opportunity for men to discuss their personal experiences and learn from others facing similar family situations. The facilitator also had firsthand experience with many of the issues the participants were confronting, so

he was able to serve as a role model. A counseling student intern also attended the support groups and provided insights on relationships.

Quenching the Father Thirst is divided into thirteen 90-minute sessions, half of which cover the foundations of fatherhood and half of which teach specific fathering skills. In the foundation section, men learn why fathers are important to their children's well-being, how challenges can keep men from being dads, and how their own fathers and family backgrounds shape their current behavior. The skills component of the curriculum teaches fathers how to communicate and play with their children, how to be emotionally involved and instill values in their children, how to discipline appropriately, and how to partner with the mother of the children. Although the curriculum does not address child support legal issues, the facilitator worked with participants on an individual basis before and after group sessions to provide extra support, such as assisting with child support paperwork.

4.3.4 Linkages to Other Services

Participants requested a variety of services, including assistance with basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, rent, health care), GED programs, employment training and placement, parenting classes, English as second language instruction, child care, financial literacy training, and post-traumatic stress disorder counseling. HMRF referred participants to the community action agency, its partner organizations, and other organizations affiliated with the Lakewood Community Partners Collaboration.

4.3.5 Retention

Staff called participants who missed a relationship class to encourage them to complete the program or to find out why they were not able to continue.

4.3.6 Media Campaign and Community Outreach

HMRF of Lakewood distributed flyers at the Lakewood Community Partners Collaboration meetings, churches, and local businesses. The initiative was also publicized at various special events in the community, including the Ethnic Feast in Tacoma, the Jam Fest at St. John's Church, and the Community Health Care Fair.

4.4 Child Support Involvement and Other Participant Characteristics

4.4.1 Management Information System Data Highlights

The data described here include HMRF of Lakewood participant data for the 206 participants entered into the MIS as of December 2010. However, the information for each participating survey respondent is not complete because all participants did not complete the intake survey. As a result, the data available are not representative of all HMRF participants. The percentages reported in this section are calculated based on the number of participants who

responded to each item on the intake survey (as noted in the table), not the total number of participants in the program. Table 4-1 displays select characteristics and includes the number of people who responded to each item. Three quarters of participants who

Table 4-1. Selected Characteristics of a Subset of Participants in the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood of Lakewood, December 2010

	Characteristics^a	Percentage
Gender (<i>n</i> =204)	Female	75
	Male	24
Age (<i>n</i> =193)	18 to 24	2
	25 to 29	15
	30 to 34	19
	35 to 39	21
	40 to 49	16
	50 to 64	27
	65 and older	<1
Education completed (<i>n</i> =156)	No formal schooling	1
	8th grade or less	24
	Some high school	15
	General equivalency diploma	15
	High school diploma	10
	Technical or trade school	26
	Some college or 2-year degree	4
	Bachelor's degree	2
Graduate or professional degree	2	
Employment status (<i>n</i> =194)	Not employed	60
	Part time	11
	Full time	29
Marital status (<i>n</i> =163)	Never married	42
	Married	20
	Divorced	20
	Separated	10
	Widowed	7
Number of children living with participant (<i>n</i> =119)	0	20
	1	38
	2	24
	3	10
	4 or more	8
Number of other children (<i>n</i> =125)	0	7
	1	43
	2	31
	3	13
	4 or more	6

^a The numbers are different in each category because respondents did not complete every item on the survey. In addition, this table only describes those who had participated in the program as of December 2010.

completed the intake survey during this period were female. Most of these respondents were from Tacoma (54 percent) or Lakewood (17 percent). People of varying ages took part in the program; those over 50 represented over one quarter (27 percent) of participants. Most participants had low levels of education and employment. About 40 percent of participants for whom data were available had less than a high school education and 60 percent were not employed. Forty-two percent of participants for whom data were available had never been married and 62 percent had one or two children living with them. In addition, nearly three quarters had one or two other children who were not living with them.

4.4.2 Participant Involvement with Child Support Enforcement System

As shown in Table 4-2, 65 percent of HMRF participants in the MIS dataset for whom data were available matched in child support administrative data records. Of the matched group, over three quarters (79 percent) were noncustodial parents, and over half (52 percent) had multiple child support cases. In over one quarter of cases (27 percent), paternity was not in question. Paternity was most commonly established by court order (48 percent) and also through paternity affidavit or administrative order (24 percent). The amount of child support orders varied. Child support orders averaged \$181 per month.¹⁰

¹⁰ Average monthly child support obligation was tabulated by case not by participant.

Table 4-2. Child Support and Paternity Information for a Subset of Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood of Lakewood Participants, December 2010

Characteristics ^a		Percentage or Number in Each Category
Total number of participants who matched in the child support system		134
Percentage of the total number of participants that matched in child support system (<i>n</i> =400)		65%
Does the participant have multiple child support cases? (<i>n</i> =134)	Yes	52%
	No	48%
For participants with an active child support order, court ordered payment amount (<i>n</i> =128)	\$1–\$100 monthly	18%
	\$101–\$200 monthly	24%
	\$201–\$300 monthly	20%
	\$301–\$400 monthly	16%
	\$401–\$500 monthly	10%
	\$501–\$600 monthly	2%
Average monthly child support order obligation of active cases (<i>n</i> =206)		\$181.34
Percentage of participants who are custodial or noncustodial parents (<i>n</i> =124)	Custodial parent	21%
	Noncustodial parent	79%
Established paternity for all children on all cases (<i>n</i> =124)	Not in question	27%
	By court order	48%
	By paternity affidavit/administrative order	24%

^a This table only describes those who had participated in the program as of December 2010.

4.4.3 Perspectives of Selected Participants

In a group setting, we spoke to a dozen participants about their experiences with the relationship education and fatherhood classes. Most reported that the communication skills were the most helpful and relevant component of the classes because they could be applied not just to romantic relationships but to many interpersonal interactions. A single father with two 3-year-olds expressed appreciation for the support he received through the fatherhood program, which he had not been able to find elsewhere in the community. Another father who was recently released from prison stated that the program helped him reconnect with his children after 10 years. This view was echoed by another father who was recovering from drug problems. Specifically, the fathers indicated that the class helped them learn how to discipline appropriately, lead by example, and be a father figure to their children, not a friend. By assisting with paperwork, the fatherhood program also helped one participant gain temporary custody of his children. A couple in the relationship skills class indicated that much of the information seemed to be aimed at newlyweds. Because they

had already been married for 15 years, they felt that it was not applicable to their situation. However, this couple stated that the financial skills component of the class was helpful.

Participants put forward many suggestions for modifying or enhancing the program. For example, participants expressed interest in more advanced fatherhood classes for those who completed the initial class. They also suggested holding more classes to accommodate people's schedules and offering free child care to make it more convenient for parents to attend. Another recommendation was to videotape the classes so that participants can review the material, which would be particularly helpful for those who later experience the issue discussed in the class. A related suggestion was to offer a hotline so that individuals facing a particular challenge after the class could receive assistance. Regarding class content, participants suggested adding more information about disciplining children and including more role-playing.

4.5 Conclusion

Even though MDC, the lead service provider, was part of a community coalition of more than 75 stakeholders, HMRF of Lakewood had difficulty securing match funding from the community. The problem delayed the initiative's ability to draw down federal funding and begin service delivery. Despite the delays, more than 200 individuals took the relationship skills and fatherhood classes through HMRF. Most were economically and educationally disadvantaged. Some people were exposed to healthy relationship material through HMRF's partnerships with other programs. In particular, home visitors addressing parenting issues were able to address relationship skills, particularly communication and conflict resolution, as part of their work. Participants with whom we spoke also indicated that the communication skills they learned in the classes can be effectively applied to many situations in their lives. Overall, the participant responses suggest that continued programming of the type provided by this initiative would be helpful to the community.

5. HEALTHY FAMILIES, YAKIMA WASHINGTON

5.1 Introduction

Healthy Families Yakima (HFY) developed from an existing, informal coalition of people working in nonprofit and government agencies, businesses, and faith-based organizations. They came together to become more effective in serving families. The group worked together on various projects, including an Office of Child Support Special Improvement Project grant related to grandparent caregivers. In 2002, recognizing the importance of healthy family relationships to successful child outcomes, the coalition formalized its desire to provide relationship education throughout Yakima County, laying the groundwork for HFY. The coalition members viewed healthy relationship education as a preventive measure in a community with high out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorces involving children. In addition, the members regarded forming a coalition as a means of providing more efficient and broad-based services; previous efforts aimed at improving family relationships had been disjointed. With that in mind, the coalition worked with the local child support agency and applied for a waiver for a Community Healthy Marriage Initiative in 2003. The waiver was granted in 2005. The state-level child support agency became involved as the contracting agency after the waiver was funded.

5.1.1 Funding

HFY received a matching federal grant with a funding cap of \$1 million. Over the course of the initiative, HFY spent \$973,118. Despite the fact that HFY's member organizations previously organized as an informal coalition and were well known in the community with a track record of successful projects, the economic downturn made it difficult for HFY to raise the matching funds needed for the project. Previously, the group could count on agencies and members of the community to make donations, but in an economic environment where a number of local organizations were forced to close, this was no longer possible. Some donors were also hesitant to donate to the city, as opposed to donating directly to a community-based organization. However, HFY had success getting organizations to donate space and getting the media to donate air time for advertisements promoting the program.

5.1.2 Target Population

The target population was cohabiting couples, couples thinking of marriage, and married couples. Although not specifically targeted, interested single individuals could participate as well. Each of the service providers served different subsets of the target population depending on their expertise. This approach was important given the large geographic area of the Yakima Valley and the county's diverse population. For example, People for People served an urban clientele with its downtown location and ability to provide child care. Family Connections drew Spanish-speaking participants. United Christian Church attracted people of varying ages and backgrounds, from engaged couples to those in second marriages to

people who were married for decades. Business groups were attracted to Bethel Ridge retreats because of the impact that improved family relationships can have on employee productivity.

5.1.3 Organizational Structure and Staffing

The City of Yakima hired a consultant with nonprofit and community development experience to manage the project. She was responsible for building and maintaining relationships with partners, conducting strategic planning, and marketing the program in the community. She reported to the Yakima City Council and a steering committee, which provided oversight to ensure that the project was aligned with **City's** mission and core values. The steering committee was composed of one member from each of the following agencies: the City of Yakima Financial Services Office, Yakima County Community Services Office, the nonprofit organization People for People, the South Central Workforce Council, and the local office of the state Division of Child Support.

HFY contracted with five local organizations to provide marriage and relationship education classes. HFY did not establish relationships with all of the organizations that were interested in providing services under the waiver. Instead, HFY created an application form with a budget section that interested organizations had to complete to be considered. HFY received 12 to 15 applications and ultimately selected five providers. The organizations were chosen based on their ability to conduct fundraising and marketing for the program and offer incentives to encourage participation, such as meals and transportation. All of the providers signed a contract with the city outlining the services they would provide.

5.2 Program Planning and Design Phase

5.2.1 Project Goals and Objectives

HFY was designed to create a community-wide focus on children and families and promote a culture that supports and encourages two-parent families. To accomplish this goal, HFY sought to identify and expand local resources and services, including premarital preparation and marriage education, so that more couples had access to the knowledge and skills to form and sustain healthy marriages and relationships. The project also aimed to increase paternity establishment and compliance with child support orders by integrating healthy relationship programming with child support activities.

5.2.2 Planning and Design Changes

Initially, Families Northwest planned to serve as the fiduciary agent for HFY. Families Northwest is a nonprofit organization dedicated to building a cultural foundation that supports marriage, family life, and children. However, Families Northwest was trying to work out its own trajectory as an agency and did not feel that it had the capacity at that time to be the fiduciary agent. Also, it was unclear whether the organization would be able

to meet the faith-based guidelines necessary to administer the waiver. As a result, the City of Yakima became the fiduciary agent, even though the waiver encompassed Yakima County as a whole. With this development, the objective of the project shifted from promoting healthy marriages to healthy relationships, more broadly. This shift helped the initiative gain credibility among some community organizations that were initially concerned that faith-based organizations would encourage women to stay married, even if their relationships were abusive.

5.2.3 Key Partners

HFY partners were nonprofit organizations; all but one was faith based. People for People is a community-based organization that provides transportation services, employment and training, and 2-1-1 information referral services to people in central and south central Washington State. People for People trained seven facilitators in the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) curriculum.

Bethel Ridge is a faith-based, nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening families by providing clinical counseling, therapeutic experiences, and educational programs in a retreat setting. Prior to becoming a provider for HFY, Bethel Ridge was already offering counseling at its facility and staff felt that their model would work for relationship skills education as well. Bethel Ridge trained three facilitators in the PREP curriculum.

Family Connections is a multi-sector partnership of faith-based, business, government, and educational entities in the Yakima Valley striving to improve marriage and family through education and mentoring. Family Connections gave HFY a presence in the lower Yakima Valley.

Several local churches also served as partners. United Christian Church of Yakima (UCC) set up an autonomous organization, known as 4 A Lot of Us, to provide healthy relationship education led by two trained facilitators. UCC had not previously provided relationship education; the waiver provided the impetus to do so. Westside Baptist Church, which had substantial experience delivering marriage education, aided the development of HFY by sharing its experiences running Christian marriage education classes and helping with marketing; however Westside did not provide classes through HFY.

5.3 Initial Operations and Services

5.3.1 Recruitment Strategies

HFY established a memorandum of understanding with Children’s Village, which in partnership with Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital and the Yakima Farm Workers Clinic, offers the Nurse-Family Partnership program. Through this program, a specially trained nurse works with first-time mothers, including teens, during pregnancy and through the

baby's second birthday. The memorandum of understanding established the process for referring Nurse-Family Partnership clients to HFY. The HFY manager worked with the nurses to pick an HFY provider that was best suited to the clients.

In addition, providers drew on their existing clientele and referral networks to recruit participants. For example, one facilitator, a licensed clinical social worker with 35 years of experience, was able to draw on the relationships he established with multiple clinics in the area for referrals.

The project director also educated the local child support office staff about the program to generate referrals.

5.3.2 Intake and Screening

The intake form captured demographic information about the participant (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity, language, educational level, income), characteristics of their relationship and family structure, (e.g., whether their partner is participating in the program, whether they have children), and how the individual found out about the program.

HFY did not have a formal prescreening process to identify couples experiencing domestic violence. Instead, at intake, participants received information about domestic violence along with a list of local service providers for a variety of issues, including domestic violence. The materials included the following statement, which was verbally reinforced at intake as well as at the start of the first class:

The Healthy Families Yakima education program "Fighting for Your Marriage" is an educational workshop designed to give couples tools to strengthen and build their healthy relationship through improved communication. It is not group counseling or couples therapy and is not appropriate for couples experiencing extreme relationship distress such as domestic violence.

In addition, facilitators received domestic violence training, including how to recognize potential warning signs and where to refer individuals for assistance. They stated that for the most part, domestic violence did not come up during the classes, but when it did, participants were referred to other organizations.

5.3.3 Curriculum and Service Delivery

HFY facilitators affiliated with each of the provider organizations were trained in the PREP curriculum and domestic violence awareness. They used the PREP curriculum, which focuses on communication skills, including how partners can address problems, avoid standoffs, and connect with each other instead of pushing each other away. Providers indicated that the speaker-listener techniques covered by the curriculum resonated most with participants. They also noted that it was easy to modify the curriculum based on the needs of the

particular class. For example, one provider stated that it was necessary to modify the curriculum to accommodate single parents because it was geared mainly toward couples.

Bethel Ridge held its classes as weekend retreats in a wilderness setting in Naches, Washington, to take people away from the stressors in their environment, enable them to focus entirely on the class, and ensure completion. The retreats were held from Friday evening to noon on Sunday. They consisted of role-playing to give couples a chance to practice the skills that they learned. The retreats had one facilitator and multiple coaches, who worked individually with the couples. Bethel Ridge held retreats two weekends a month for 2 years. The largest class consisted of four couples. Some participants asked to take the class again, which Bethel Ridge permitted if they volunteered at the retreat facility.

People for People initially offered 3-hour weekday evening classes; however, these were challenging for people to attend. The organization then offered weekend retreats from Friday evening to Saturday evening. Child care was provided. Overall, 37 participants completed the program with People for People. In addition, People for People reached out to a counselor who works with youth in a GED program; 17 of these students completed the relationship skills class.

Another provider, United Christian Church, also held Friday evening to Saturday evening retreats with two to eight people per session. In total, 56 people completed the program. Child care and meals were provided. However, United's facilitators stated that they were generally disappointed with the turnout. The people they did reach, however, represented a broad cross-section of the local population, from at-risk youth to medical students.

Family Connections experimented with offering the classes during the evenings as well as weekend retreats. They served approximately 120 people. The organization had strong relationships within the Latino community and was able to deliver PREP in both English and Spanish.

5.3.4 Linkages to Other Services

HFY educated its facilitators on resources available in the community, so they would be able to refer clients to local organizations to address a broad range of needs, from teen pregnancy outreach to a medical clinic for farm workers to substance abuse treatment. Counseling and parenting classes were the most common requests. Staff found that participants were more likely to express their needs in the classes, rather than through a screening form. As a result, facilitators presented information about community resources during the classes.

5.3.5 Retention

Some of the providers offered child care and food to make it easier for participants to attend the classes. Generally, they found that people report missing classes because of child care issues, including dealing with sick children. One provider noted, however, that it was challenging to provide child care because of space constraints and because parents can become distracted by their children nearby.

5.3.6 Media Campaign and Community Outreach

HFY placed advertisements on billboards and television promoting the importance of healthy relationships and publicizing the available classes. The project director also appeared on local morning shows to promote the program, and providers distributed flyers highlighting their classes. In addition, HFY had a website with content in English and Spanish. When promoting the program, providers emphasized that the classes offered the opportunity to learn communication skills that could be applied in broad range of settings, like school and work. They stressed the educational component of the program to make potential participants aware that they were not signing up for therapy sessions or counseling.

5.4 Child Support Involvement and Other Participant Characteristics

5.4.1 Management Information System Data Highlights

The data described here include HFY data entered into the MIS on 400 participants served as of April 2011.¹¹ However, the information for each participant is not complete, and the available data are not representative of all HFY participants because not all participants completed intake forms. The percentages reported in this section were calculated based on the number of participants who responded to each item on the intake survey, not the total number of participants in the program. Table 5-1 displays selected characteristics and includes the number of people who responded to each item. As indicated in the table, 53 percent of respondents were female and people of varying ages took part in the program, with respondents between 40 and 49 representing nearly one quarter. In addition, most participants for whom data were available had some postsecondary education, including one quarter with a bachelor's degree. Most respondents (63 percent) reported working full time. The vast majority (80 percent) of those for whom data were available were married. Nearly one third did not have children living with them, while one quarter had two children living with them. Most participants for whom data were available indicated that they learned about the program through a friend, family member, or their church.

¹¹ HFY served a total of 800 participants as of April 2011; however, some participants did not sign consent forms for their data to be shared with the evaluation team, so we are not able to report any information about them here. According to the program manager, 1,027 people had participated in HFY by the time the program ended in June 2011.

Table 5-1. Select Characteristics of a Subset of Participants in Healthy Families Yakima, April 2011

	Characteristics ^a	Percent
Gender (<i>n</i> =397)	Female	53
	Male	47
Age (<i>n</i> =340)	18 to 24	5
	25 to 29	16
	30 to 34	18
	35 to 39	15
	40 to 49	24
	50 to 64	16
	65 and older	6
Education completed (<i>n</i> =363)	No formal schooling	<1
	8th grade or less	1
	Some high school	5
	General equivalency diploma	5
	High school diploma	14
	Technical or trade school	10
	Some college or 2-year degree	29
	Bachelor's degree	25
Graduate or professional degree	11	
Work status (<i>n</i> =336)	Not employed	19
	Part time	18
	Full time	63
Marital status (<i>n</i> =332)	Never married	10
	Married	80
	Divorced	5
	Separated	4
	Widowed	<1
Number of children living with participant (<i>n</i> =396)	0	32
	1	18
	2	28
	3	16
	4 or more	7

^a The numbers are different in each category because respondents did not complete every item on the survey. In addition, this table only describes those who had participated in the program as of April 2011.

5.4.2 Participant Involvement with Child Support Enforcement System

As shown in Table 5-2, only 21 percent of HFY participants matched in child support administrative data records. Of those who matched, about two thirds were custodial parents, and most (63 percent) only had one child support case. In most cases (60 percent), paternity was not in question. Paternity was established by court order (26 percent) and paternity affidavit or administrative order (14 percent). The amount of child support orders varied. Child support orders averaged \$249 per month.¹²

Table 5-2. Child Support and Paternity Information for a Subset of Healthy Families Yakima Participants, April 2011

Characteristics ^a		Percentage or Number in Each Category
Total number of participants who matched in the child support system:		82
Percentage of the total number of participants who matched in child support system (<i>N</i> =400)		21%
Does the participant have multiple child support cases? (<i>n</i> =82)	Yes	37%
	No	63%
For participants with an active child support order, court ordered payment amount (<i>n</i> =60)	\$1–\$100 monthly	25%
	\$101–\$200 monthly	22%
	\$201–\$300 monthly	23%
	\$301–\$400 monthly	10%
	\$401–\$500 monthly	10%
	\$501–\$600 monthly	2%
>\$601 monthly		8%
Average monthly child support order obligation of active cases (<i>n</i> =60)		\$249
Percentage of participants who are custodial or noncustodial parents (<i>n</i> =64)	Both ^b	5%
	Custodial parent	67%
	Noncustodial parent	28%
Established paternity for all children (<i>n</i> =130)	Not in question	60%
	By court order	26%
	By paternity affidavit/administrative order	14%

^a This table only describes those who had participated in the program as of April 2011.

^b Some parents have custody of one or more of their children and are noncustodial parents of other children.

¹² Average monthly child support obligation was tabulated by case, not by participant.

5.4.3 Conclusion

Responding to high out-of-wedlock birth rates and divorces involving children in their community, an informal coalition already working together to help local families decided in 2003 to apply for an 1115 waiver to create a Community Healthy Marriage Initiative aimed at delivering comprehensive relationship-strengthening services. After the waiver was granted in 2005 and matching funding materialized, five organizations well known in the community provided marriage and relationship education classes to more than 400 participants as of April 2011. These organizations drew on their existing clientele and referral networks to recruit participants. Each was able to serve different segments of the population in need of services, from Spanish speakers to those in their second marriages. These HFY partners believe that the project can be replicated outside of Yakima; however, they have stressed the importance of having the local community build and take ownership of the project. They noted that other communities may be able to use existing coalitions, particularly those focused on the well-being of children. Having organizations and coalitions well known in the community spearhead the effort may aid in fundraising and recruiting participants. In addition, other communities can adapt the PREP curriculum to meet the particular needs of families in their area. The bottom line is that the HFY partners strongly believe that the curriculum enables participants to learn and practice practical skills that are useful not only for intimate relationships, but also for other interpersonal relationships.

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