

**RAPID RESPONSE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR
TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)
AND WELFARE TO WORK (WtW)
Contract No. 233-01-0067**

**REGION VI MIDWINTER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE
Task Order No. 21
January 21-24, 2003
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Dallas, Texas**

The ACF Dallas Regional Office held its Midwinter Leadership Conference January 21-24, 2003, and program-specific pre-conference meetings were held on January 21, 2003. The conference theme was "Leading the Way: Positive Educational, Social and Healthy Outcomes for Children." Wade F. Horn, Ph.D., Assistant Secretary for Children and Families, was invited to address the conference during the Plenary Opening Day session on Wednesday, January 22; and he did so via videotaped message. On Wednesday afternoon, Mega-sessions were planned which addressed Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood, Early Literacy and Positive Youth Development. The focus of the sessions was to share best practices, information, and the latest research, and to provide guidance in carrying out ACF initiatives and program results. On Thursday, January 23, workshop sessions addressed strategies relating to the key Administration priorities of healthy Marriages/Responsible Fatherhood, Positive Youth Development, Literacy, Faith-Based/Community Initiatives, Child Support Enforcement, and Prevention. Cross-program cooperation was emphasized as the vital issues that affect the everyday lives of the children and families served by the ACF Regional Office.

Rapid Response funds were used to support travel expenses for 15 presenters and honoraria for 7 presenters. The mega-sessions and the workshops where these presenters participated allowed participants to be provided with the most up-to-date information in the above key priority subject areas to enable State, Tribal and local agencies to develop programs and to enhance existing programs. The sessions also facilitated collaboration in these subject areas across program lines at the various agency levels.

Summaries of the various sessions that utilized Rapid Response funds are as follows:

Improving Children's Lives by Encouraging Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriages

Moderator: *Bill Coffin, Marriage Education Specialist, ACF*

Presenters: *Patrick Fagan, Fellow, The Heritage Foundation*
Scott Stanley, Ph.D., University of Denver
Howard Hendrick, Secretary, Oklahoma Health and Human Services Cabinet and
Director, Oklahoma Department of Human Services
Christopher Brown, Vice President of State and Community Initiatives, National
Fatherhood Initiative

Date: Wednesday, January 22, 2003

Time: 1:30p.m. – 5:00p.m.

Room: Landmark C

The 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) authorized the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. PRWORA stated four broad goals of TANF, three of which relate to “promoting . . . marriage,” “preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies,” and “encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.” As the discussion of TANF reauthorization continues, State human service agencies are paying more attention to marriage-related policies to strengthen families and promote responsible fatherhood and healthy marriages. In this session, participants learned why responsible fatherhood and healthy marriages are so important to our society, what the impact of these issues are in the welfare reform arena, and how human service agencies can and should become involved in these key priorities.

Mr. Bill Coffin, Special Assistant in ACF with expertise in marriage education, moderated the session. The session consisted of four nationally-known speakers: Patrick Fagan of the Heritage Foundation, Dr. Scott Stanley of the University of Denver, Howard Hendrick, Cabinet Secretary of Oklahoma’s Health and Human Services, and Christopher Brown of the National Fatherhood Initiative. Mr. Fagan and Dr. Stanley presented prior to the mid-afternoon break, followed by Mr. Hendrick and Mr. Brown, who presented after the break.

Patrick Fagan’s presentation, “The Map of Marriage in America’s Families,” focused on much data and research to prove the point that two-parent (first marriage) relationships is critical to ensuring the wellbeing of children in this country. Mr. Fagan first presented data regarding the median annual income of families with children by family structure: First Marriage (\$48,000); Stepfamily (\$45,900); Cohabiting Couples (\$25,000); Divorced/Separated (\$18,500); and Never Married/Single Parent (\$15,000). In terms of percent of families in poverty, the following data were presented: First Marriage (10%); Stepfamily (9%); Widowed (39%); Cohabiting (42%); Divorced/Separated (49%) and Never Married/Single Parent (66%). In terms of the impact of divorce on families with children, research suggests that the average annual earnings prior to divorce are \$43,600, dropping by 42% to \$25,300 after divorce. Welfare dependence dramatically increases with the lack of marriage. In “within wedlock birth” situations, intact marriages have a 12% chance of being dependent on welfare while 28% of divorced situations result in welfare dependency. For “out-of-wedlock” birth situations, subsequent marriages have a 41% chance of being on welfare, compared to 71% of “never married” cases.

Per a 1993 study, the median household wealth of persons aged 51-61, by marital status is as follows: Married (\$132,000), Widowed (\$42,275), Never Married (\$35,000), Divorced (\$33,670), and Separated (\$7,600). It was also noted that married people are more than twice as likely to be happy. The average grade point average (GPA) for American teens by family background is as follows: intact marriages (2.98), cohabiting couples (2.79), stepparents (2.71), always single parent (2.67), and divorced (2.64). School expulsion is also less likely with intact families. In Wisconsin, juvenile incarceration rates are up to 22 times higher among children of single parent families. Other statistics suggest that adolescents in married families are less likely to be depressed: Married (52%), divorced (70%), stepfamily (73%), cohabiting (85%), and single/never married (94%). Also, teens from intact married families are less likely to be

sexually active. That is, teens in intact married families are about ½ as likely to be sexually active than any other family structure. Research also suggests that the out-of-wedlock birthrates in the case of teens have been dropping, while the out-of-wedlock birthrates in young women between the ages of 25-29 have been rising in recent years. Bottom line is that family structure does matter to kids.

Dr. Scott Stanley next discussed issues around healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood. Dr. Stanley began his presentation by noting that the vast majority of people want happy, lasting marriages regardless of racial, social, or economic status. It was noted that 85% of Americans will marry at some point during their lives. Dr. Stanley noted that, at the time of birth of a child, most unmarried parents are committed to each other and have high hopes of marriage---a magic moment for many couples. Certainly there are many barriers to marriage including low education, low job skills, lack of employment, etc. However, Dr. Stanley notes that there is ample evidence that people, who choose marriage, benefit on many of those fronts including education, employment, wealth, health, etc. Reference was made to Linda Waite's and Maggie Gallagher's book, "The Case for Marriage." As a culture, Dr. Stanley notes that we have become deeply ambivalent about marriage. We desire it, yet we fear it. We approach it, yet we pull away.

Why does marriage matter? Fathers are most likely to maintain a connection with their children when they maintain a connection with the mothers of their children. Dr. Stanley suggested that the progression/stages in a relationship leading to marriage is as follows: (1) similarities and differences spurs attraction, which leads to (2) satisfaction and spending time together, which leads to (3) attachment with a loss of anxiety, which leads to (4) developing a commitment to secure an attachment, which leads to (5) marriage. It is noted that, on average, married men are just as committed to the spouse as married women are. "Men see marriage as a final step in a prolonged process of growing up." Acts of sacrifice were found to be less likely to be as detrimental to self if there is a high couple identity (males) and there is a long term view (males and females). The effects are far stronger for men. A theory that is being tested is that an attachment to a partner triggers sacrificial behavior in females; whereas, a decision to commit to a partner triggers sacrificial behavior in males. Much of Dr. Stanley's work addresses the issue of commitment. It was noted that he would discuss the issue of commitment and introduce the PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program) at Thursday morning's session.

Howard Hendrick presented on the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative in terms of why such an initiative was created. Basically about 4 or 5 years ago, a group of economists, after studying the reasons for the State's economic woes, reported that much of the problem stemmed from the State's high divorce rate, i.e., broken families. Oklahoma, at that time, ranked 2nd in the nation with regard to divorces. Mr. Hendrick noted that in Linda Waite's and Maggie Gallagher's book, marriage should be viewed as a public institution rather than merely a private choice. Mr. Hendrick indicated that, on average, divorce for men shortens the life expectancy as if one smokes a pack of cigarettes per day.

Much of the remainder of Mr. Hendrick's presentation focused on comparing various family structures within the context of participation in the various social service programs, (e.g., TANF, Medicaid, Food Stamps, etc.). Regarding families with children on food stamps, it is noted that

as of April 1, 2002, 73% of the 48,625 households were not married compared to 27% of those households being married. By the end of calendar year 2002, the food stamp population rose to 78,371 households with children---66% not married compared to 34% married. Within the TANF caseload (April 2002), 62% of the households consisted of a single parent compared to 7% of the households made up of married couples; 11% were divorced; 19% married but not together.

Mr. Hendrick presented some of the data that was published by the Oklahoma State University, Bureau for Social Research, on the 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce, an effort to determine the attitudes and characteristics of divorced Oklahomans. This was a project of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. It was found that 82% of all adults in Oklahoma had been married at some point compared to 73% nationally. However, besides being a marrying state, Oklahoma is also a divorcing state---32% of all adults have divorced in Oklahoma compared to 21% nationally. Also a higher percentage of currently married Oklahomans have thought about divorce (56%) than married persons in the country as a whole (42%). Therefore, not only are Oklahomans more likely to have divorced, married Oklahomans are more likely to have thought about divorcing. It was also noted that Oklahomans marry an average of 2 ½ years younger than the national median age at first marriage. Also, whether male or female, low-income or not, those who have been divorced are most likely to give the following two reasons for their divorces: (1) lack of commitment (85%), and (2) too much conflict and arguing (61%). The third most common reason for divorce was infidelity or extra-marital affair (58%).

Mr. Hendrick also noted that religiosity has an impact on marriage. Those who reported being more religious have (1) higher levels of commitment, (2) higher levels of marital satisfaction, (3) less talk of divorce, and (4) lower levels of negative interaction. Additional findings of the survey reported that 34% of the married respondents to the survey considered their marriage to be in serious trouble at some point. Of these people, 92% said that they were glad they were still together. In concluding his presentation, Mr. Hendrick compared the costs of providing “artificial” family supports vs. providing support for strengthening “natural” family supports. In referencing the “artificial” supports, Mr. Hendrick was alluding to Child Support Enforcement costs; family support program costs in food stamps, Medicaid and TANF; all of which do not do much to address the well-being of children. On the other hand, the benefits of human service agencies supporting the strengthening of the natural family supports such as reducing the demand for public services, lengthening the life of individuals, allowing individuals the capabilities of accumulating more wealth, and supporting additional family strengthening/healthy marriage policies, go a long way to improving child well-being.

Christopher Brown, Vice President of the National Fatherhood Initiative, focused his presentation on “The Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Movements: What’s the Link.” Mr. Brown indicated that there is a need to raise the benefits of marriage and responsible fatherhood, while lowering the costs. The overriding link between marriage and responsible fatherhood is that marriage is the primary institution in all societies that connects fathers with their children. In this country, the rise of father absence from the home has risen from 11% in 1960 to 26% in the year 2000. Some of the consequences of father absence include the following: (1) children are 5 times more likely to live in poverty, (2) children are 2 times more likely to abuse drugs, and (3) children are 3 times more likely to commit suicide. Although certainly not all inclusive, the

benefits of father involvement include better cognitive outcomes even as infants, higher self-esteem, higher grades in school, and lower drug and alcohol use. During the presentation, Mr. Brown also spoke of some of the cultural and physiological connections when the father is present in the home vs. being absent.

Mr. Brown noted that when there is no father in the home, then there is no positive model that children can learn from in terms of relating to healthy relationships. The point being is that children learn from their parents' marriage. They learn that (1) marriage is a priority, (2) mom and dad support each other, (3) mom and dad respect each other, (4) mom and dad trust each other, (5) mom and dad show affection for one another, and (6) mom and dad resolve conflicts in a healthy way. Mr. Brown went on to say that marriage has many benefits to fathers. Married fathers are more likely than unmarried fathers or single men to: (1) have healthier children, (2) have daily access to their children, (3) have more savings, investments and assets, (4) have more and better and safer sex, and (5) are less likely to be cheated on. Marriage also improves the fathers' health. Through research, married men are found to be more likely to take care of themselves. They are more likely to exercise, have higher levels of happiness and are 6 times less likely than single men to be incarcerated. Finally, it was noted that marriage at the time of birth is the chief predictor of father presence in the home.

Mr. Brown spent a brief time on the issue of fatherhood legislation. He mentioned TANF Reauthorization, specifically referenced last year's bill, HR 4737. He noted that there was \$200 million being set-aside for marriage research and demonstrations, but only \$20 million for fatherhood initiatives. He also commented on funds for employment of non-custodial parents, abstinence education and teen pregnancy prevention. He also referenced two additional players, that being the Bayh/Carper Bill in the Senate as well as the Senate Finance Committee. It was mentioned that Utah and Virginia were the first states to really launch fatherhood efforts in 1994. Now, 35 states have established fatherhood commissions, initiatives or programs---the majority having been established since 1999. Challenges for the fatherhood movement include (1) limited federal and state dollars, (2) some of the leading national foundations are pulling back, (3) funders are certainly demanding more accountability, (4) growing Latino population impacting fatherhood issues, and (5) integration of the fatherhood movement with the highly visible marriage movement. Mr. Brown concluded his presentation with a quote from anthropologist Margaret Mead, "The primary task of every civilization is to teach young men to be fathers."

Evaluations were completed for the mega-session in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. The session was attended by nearly 250 participants initially. However, after the midafternoon break, many participants attended other breakout sessions; thus we concluded the afternoon session with approximately 65 participants. One hundred and nine participants completed evaluations. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes the ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters' scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Patrick Fagan	4.3	3.7	4.4	3.1
Dr. Scott Stanley	4.5	4.1	4.6	3.7
Howard Hendrick	4.6	4.4	4.7	3.9
Christopher Brown	4.7	4.6	4.9	4.3

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the session’s participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of the “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” Initiative 3.7
- Information in initiating or expanding the role of “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” projects in the delivery of social services throughout government programs was provided 3.7
- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting “Healthy Marriages/Responsible Fatherhood” 3.7

The session’s participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional comments. There were at least a dozen or so evaluations that suggested that the research and data were very useful to them in order to discuss the “healthy marriage” issue with their customers and peers. However, there were a like number of critical comments noting that the presenters imparted too much data, without getting into practical applications. The only other significant critical comment (noted in 10 evaluations) was that there was a lack of handouts. In response to this, the presenters did reference their respective organizations’ web-sites, noting where they could find the data being discussed. Also, Chris Brown offered a sign-up list, noting that he would send his powerpoint presentation to those interested. There were several additional comments recognizing the expertise that was brought to the session.

Positive Youth Development: Development in Response to Needs of Youth

Moderator: Susan Macaulay, MPA, Program Coordinator, ACF Region VI, Dallas

Presenters: Evy Kay Ritzen, MBA, Planning Director, Target: Kids in Court, Dallas
and Transition Resource Center, Dallas
Wendy Lorenzi, BSW, San Antonio Youth Advocates in Action, San Antonio
Gibby Serna, Age 19 – Emergency - was unable to attend
Scott Ackerson, LMSW, Director, Casey Family Programs Community
Transition Resource Center, Dallas

Session: Wednesday, January 23, 2003 Time: 3:30 – 5:00 p.m. Room: Reunion F

The Positive Youth Development MEGA, held on Wednesday afternoon, January 23, 2003, contained three presentations: (1) Harry Wilson, Associate Commissioner, Family and Youth Service Bureau, addressed the issues surrounding the Administration's initiative on Positive Youth Development ; (2) the National Guard panel presented an overview of two programs devoted to youth and young adults; and (3) a panel session devoted to "Positive Youth Development – Response to the Needs of Youth. This third session was supported in part by Rapid Response funding for the two youth panelists, one of which was unable to participate because of an emergency.

The Moderator introduced the audience to the issue that "Too Many Youth Transitioning from Foster Care and other State Care Fail to Reach Healthy, Independent Adulthood." This session provided a panel overview of how two organizations in two Texas cities are addressing and responding to this issue.

Based on its practice and expertise, Casey Family Program began developing a youth transition resource center model in San Antonio, Texas, nearly six years ago to help alleviate a serious problem in resources unavailable to youth transitioning from state foster care. And in Dallas, Texas, during 2002, a subcommittee of a community collaborative, Target Kids in Court, in Dallas, TX, researched and discovered a similar need for resources in the Region III CPS area representing 19 counties in and around Dallas and Fort Worth. The Region III youth emancipation facts were staggering: In one year when 100 youth left foster care at the age of 18, the following year nearly 60% of the girls were pregnant within one year and 25% of the 100 were homeless. A second community collaborative was formed in Dallas, Texas, based on the Casey experience in San Antonio.

This one-stop service youth resource model, as developed in two Texas cities, is becoming a promising practice for including youth at the beginning of any development that involves youth as a customer and stakeholder. Youth learn skills and develop positive roadmaps to become self-sufficient adults. Examples of this were two youth, now young adults, who continue to benefit from their early experiences at the Community Transition Services Center in San Antonio. The goal is to replicate this model throughout the state of Texas and onto the national level.

Progress in youth involvement continues at CTSC through the outgrowth development of the Youth Advocates in Action group. Wendy Lorenzi, one of the original youth at CTSC, told a powerful story about how being in the foster care system is hard and full of problems. But she also shared how she and others have moved successfully from Foster Care through the Community Transition Services Center (CTSC) to develop the Youth Advocates in Action (YAIA).

The mission of YAIA is to educate the community and to serve as a recognized advocate for change in the child welfare system. Some of the YAIA Action Goals include:

- ✓ Broadening service access for youth
- ✓ Providing Medicaid Mailboxes,
- ✓ Empowering Youth,
- ✓ Engaging and educating communities,

- ✓ Providing a supportive network, and
- ✓ Promoting System Improvement.

The YAIA is organized into three sub-groups: Development, Marketing, and Recruitment. YAIA members, who are young adults in and out of the foster care system, meet biweekly at the Community Transition Center in San Antonio, TX. One of the agenda items includes the discussion of problems in the foster care system and how they can advocate for change within the system for the youth in care and the ones to come. Funding from Jim Casey Youth Opportunity Initiative would enable YAIA to create local chapters in Texas and educate more groups about the foster care system.

Wendy Lorenzi shared the YAIA “Who Am I” statement, which was written by one of the active youth members. The “Who Am I “ statement speaks for youth that come together and meet to share how children and youth growing up in care are moved around many times resulting in difficulty sometimes to maintain the emotional attachments that were successfully made with a former foster care family.

Questions and answers followed. Clearly many attendees learned for the first time about how difficult it can be for foster care youth emancipating from state care to grow into a self-reliant adult and how two communities are addressing this issue.

Evaluations were completed for the youth mega-session in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes the ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters’ scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Evy Kay Ritzen, TKIC	4.7	4.7	4.5	4.0
Scott Ackerson, CTRC	4.8	5.0	4.8	4.3
Maricella Gulan, CTRC	4.3	4.2	4.5	3.5
Wendy Lorenzi, YAIA	4.8	4.6	4.7	4.5
Gibby Serna, YAIA	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the session’s participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of the “Positive Youth Development” Initiative. 4.3
- Information in initiating or expanding the role of “Positive Youth Development projects in the delivery of social services throughout government programs was provided. 4.5

- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting “Positive Youth Development,”

4.0

The session’s participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional comments. The information from this session found most helpful was good visuals, learning more about Casey/SA, understanding the collaboration necessary for success, explanation of how to set up an effective direct services center for youth transitioning out of care, collaboration on working with youth, content of needs from youth of YAIA, e.g. Medicaid Boxes, just the “awareness” of this “very” needed service to our great youth is most valuable to me as an employee, mother and grandmother, San Antonio/Dallas are to be commended, and steps in involving youth in the development of the centers.

Additional comments included: no handouts on information presented; could have used a little bit about the Chafee Bill and how it impacts youth transitioning out of Foster Care/Juvenile Justice care--How the two centers in San Antonio and Dallas use the Chafee \$ Thank you; workshop was informative although it had little relevance to my program; I really appreciated hearing what you would do differently; good workshop; re: tables—It was great to have tables to write on vs. take notes from our chairs; It would be good to include some case studies/stories of youth who have benefited from the Resource Center.

Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriages: What the Research is Telling Us

Moderator: *Mary Myrick, APR, President, Public Strategies, Inc.*

Presenters: *Christine Johnson, Ph.D., Director, Bureau of Social Research, Oklahoma State University*
Scott Stanley, Ph.D., Co-creator, PREP--Prevention & Relationship Enhancement
Christopher A. Brown, Vice Pres., State & Community Initiatives, National Fatherhood Initiative

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2003

Time: 8:30a.m. – 10:00a.m.

Room: Landmark D

To compliment Wednesday afternoon’s mega-session on “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood,” we began Thursday morning with a session on research. The session was designed to offer the audience much of the emerging research around fatherhood, fragile families and marriage issues.

Mary Myrick, President of Public Strategies, Inc., served as moderator for the session. She introduced the presenters, who included Dr. Christine Johnson (focused on the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative—Baseline Data), Dr. Scott Stanley (focused on PREP—Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program), and Christopher Brown (focused on the fragile family issue and how fathers are critical to the “healthy marriage” issue).

Dr. Christine Johnson, Director of the Bureau of Research at Oklahoma State University, presented on “Marriage and Family in Oklahoma.” The focus on Dr. Johnson’s presentation was on Oklahoma’s Statewide Baseline Survey on Marriage and Divorce, which was completed during the period September 2001 to January 2002 and published in July 2002. The research project was conducted to assess key attitudes and behaviors relevant to marriage and divorce in Oklahoma and to use the information to inform the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. This was a critical step in the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative as there is very little data available regarding marriage and divorce occurring in Oklahoma. The findings for the report were based on telephone interviews conducted with a statewide sample of 2,323 adults. The sample consisted of 2,020 adults from randomly selected households and 303 randomly selected current Medicaid clients. (Data were also collected from 1,000 adult residents of random households in neighboring states of Kansas, Arkansas and Texas. However, the data presented in the Oklahoma report focus only on the Oklahoma respondents.)

Dr. Johnson highlighted some of the major findings of the survey. She noted that Oklahoma was a marrying state, with 82% of adults having been married at some point compared to 73% nationally. Oklahoma is also a divorcing state as 32% of all adults have divorced compared to 21% nationally. Also, a higher percentage of currently married Oklahomans have thought about divorce (56%) than married persons in the country as a whole (42%). It’s also noted that Oklahomans marry an average of 2 ½ years younger than the national median age at first marriage. Reasons given for divorce, whether male or female, low-income or not, include lack of commitment (85%), too much conflict/arguing (61%) and infidelity/extramarital affairs (58%).

What behaviors are most strongly related to marital happiness? Among married persons, those who were most satisfied and least likely to have thought or talked about divorce had less frequent negative communications. It was noted that those Oklahomans who lived with their spouses before marriage had lower levels of satisfaction than those whom had not lived with their spouses prior to marriage. Regarding religiosity, those who reported being more religious had (1) higher levels of commitment, (2) higher levels of marital satisfaction, (3) less thought or talked of divorce, and (4) lower levels of negative interaction. Data also revealed that of the survey respondents, 34% of the married respondents considered their marriage to be in serious trouble at some point. Of these people, 92% said that they were glad they were still together.

Low-income persons (defined as recipients of government assistance) hold somewhat different views about marriage, divorce and cohabitation than non-low-income persons. They hold less positive views of marriage and are more accepting of cohabitation. They see fewer advantages to marriage, and fewer (49%) said they someday would like to be married than those who have never received government assistance (78%). Forty percent of low-income Oklahomans reject the notion that people who have children together ought to be married, whereas only 23% of non-low-income persons reject this notion. Those who have ever received government assistance are less likely to be married (41%) than persons who have never received government assistance (61%); and they are more likely never to have been married (25%) compared to 18%). Finally, 63% believe that, if they were to marry, they would lose some or all of their assistance.

When Oklahomans were asked about how they felt about a statewide marriage initiative, 66% said they would consider using relationship education to strengthen their relationship or marriage. Eighty-five percent said that a statewide initiative to promote marriage and reduce divorce is a good or very good idea. In terms of racial breakdown, 90% of African Americans considered the initiative as a good or very good idea, compared to whites (85%) and American Indian (78%). In summary, although Oklahomans are especially divorce prone, factors that affect marital success and marital distress in Oklahoma are similar to those that affect couples in the rest of the country. There is a consensus on the value of having a statewide initiative to address the issue of creating and sustaining “healthy marriages.”

Dr. Scott Stanley presented on “Research and Perspectives on Relationship Education.” Dr. Stanley initially asked, “What would it take to help more couples attain success in marriage?” Responses included (1) an increase in confidence that it’s possible, (2) an increased understanding of the benefits, (3) an increased ability to make a good choice about a partner in the first place, (4) an increased ability, through skills, attitudes and expectations, to be a good mate to one’s partner, and (5) a decrease in policies that punish marriages. Dr. Stanley noted that four of those five responses are reasonable goals of Marriage Education. The best practices in marriage education are scientifically based and regularly refined based on ongoing scientific findings and field experiences. Dr. Stanley noted that key potential benefits of Relationship Education included: (1) lowering risks through prevention, (2) an opportunity to turn things around if distressed, (3) education about why marriage matters, and (4) basic expectation about relationships, what is reasonable and what is not acceptable, can be conveyed.

As a response to the above, Dr. Stanley introduced the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP). He noted that PREP is a research, based approach; that it is empirically informed and has been empirically tested. PREP has three core education strategies: (1) Raising awareness about risk factors, (2) Fostering attitudes that give rise to action, and (3) Provides skills training and structure. Dr. Stanley then talked briefly of the three kinds of research: (1) Prediction and Risk Research, (2) Outcome Research, and (3) Survey Research. Regarding Prediction and Risk Research, Dr. Stanley made a distinction between static factors that affect divorce vs. dynamic factors, such as how people think, talk, act, etc. He noted that PREP was designed to address mainly those dynamic factors. Dr. Stanley then mentioned outcome research, noting that PREP showed very promising results on 6 of 8 outcome studies that are being conducted. Examples include a study being done in Australia, an evaluation of the U.S. Army, and study in Germany, etc. There are pre to post gains in confidence, satisfaction and the use of the “time out” employed by PREP. There are also pre to post reductions in danger signs, escalation, etc. Dr. Stanley noted that much of the research, white papers, and other marital studies can be accessed on the web-site at www.prepinc.com.

Christopher Brown, representing the National Fatherhood Initiative, spoke on “Emerging Research on Fathers.” Mr. Brown’s overriding theme is that we need to teach fathers the skills needed to have healthy marriages. Mr. Brown noted that fathers possess unique contributions to raising children: (1) dads hold kids differently, (2) dads are the “toy,” (3) dads teach self-regulation, (4) dads look to the child’s future, (5) dads teach about masculinity, (6) dads discipline less with shame and disappointment and more with real life consequences, and (7) dads encourage kids to explore. In pre-school years, fathers involvement in their children’s lives

have different effects on the cognitive development, with pronounced differences between boys and girls. Dads have a more immediate effect on boys. They also tend to spend more time with boys and boys model their dads.

Evaluations were completed for each of the Thursday workshops in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. The session was attended by nearly 65 participants. Twenty-three participants completed evaluations. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes that ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters’ scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Dr. Christine Johnson	4.3	4.2	4.2	4.2
Dr. Scott Stanley	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.1
Christopher Brown	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.3

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three outcome issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the workshop’s participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of the “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” Initiative 4.4
- Information in initiating or expanding the role of “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” projects in the delivery of social services throughout government programs was provided 4.0
- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting “Healthy Marriages/Responsible Fatherhood” 4.0

The workshop’s participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional comments. Under the “most helpful” item, attendees shared some of the following comments:

- Statistics/data supporting “healthy marriage” movement.
- PREP information; all the information presented was great (multiple comments).
- Oklahoma survey and research results.
- Notion that people want healthy relationships.
- Fatherhood statistics.
- Keys to a successful marriage.

Additional comments offered appreciation for the exposure to such extensive research on the marriage initiative. Another commenter noted that the research on fathers’ effects on boys and

girls was interesting. Finally, another commenter indicated that he/she enjoyed the research, noting they he/she was glad we are finally integrating research with application.

Organizing Community Movements to Strengthen Families

Moderator: *Bill Coffin, Marriage Education Specialist, ACF*

Presenters: *Rick Kelley, Director, Project Strong Family, Chickasaw Nation – Oklahoma*
Julie Baumgardner, Director, First Things First, Chattanooga, TN
Mary Myrick, President, Public Strategies, Inc., Oklahoma City, OK

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2003 Time: 10:30a.m. – 12:00p.m. Room: Landmark D

This session was moderated by Bill Coffin, and the panel consisted of the above-noted presenters. As our nation moves into the next phase of welfare reform, important initiatives must be examined to strengthen families. Specifically, helping men become responsible, committed, involved fathers is a major step. Helping couples who choose marriage for themselves to develop the skills and knowledge to form and sustain healthy marriages is another important step. In this workshop, attendees was exposed to the grassroots efforts of learning how state, local and tribal community organizations and institutions address the needs of families and efforts to reduce divorce, reduce out-of-wedlock births, and increase the involvement of fathers in their children's lives.

Bill Coffin opened the session, briefly commenting on the contract that ACF has with the Lewin Group---to help states/communities invest in broad-based community-level coalitions that engage in comprehensive intervention strategies promoting and maintaining healthy marriages, family formation, and responsible fatherhood, and to support these intervention strategies with technical assistance, performance measurement, and community impact assessments. Bill suggested that some of the top community leaders who are actively involved in developing such state, tribal and community efforts are Julie Baumgardner, Mary Myrick and Rick Kelley.

Rick Kelley discussed the project that the Chickasaw Nation is engaged in, entitled, "Project Strong Family." This project is intended to address strengthening Chickasaw and other Native American families through emphasizing the importance of healthy marriages. Assistance will be offered to help couples develop the skills and knowledge to form and sustain healthy marriages. The project is targeting the communities of Ada and Ardmore, Oklahoma of the tribe's service areas that include 13 counties in south central Oklahoma.

It was noted that the project obtained FY 2002 funding from the Administration for Native Americans (ANA), ACF in the amount of \$150,000. The basic approach of the project will be to move the tribe closer to achievement of its long term goals including enhancement of the overall quality of life for the Chickasaw people, prioritizing youth and family services and strengthening the tribe by strengthening its families. Mr. Kelley distributed a booklet to the workshop's attendees, upon which he based his presentation. The mission statement of Project Strong Family is to assist Native American families in building and maintaining strong family relations by providing their members with the skills and knowledge necessary to combat issues that

undermine family structure. The goal of the project is to strengthen the family unit and decrease the incidence of divorce, infidelity, violence, and other related issues that undermine the family structure. Currently, the project offers 8-week curricula to four distinct groups: (1) fatherhood, (2) single parent support, (3) youth development, and (4) blended families. Sample topics that are discussed in the fatherhood groups include effective communication, developing trust, providing quality time through time management and prioritizing, fidelity, anger management, influencing children's behavior and drug and alcohol abuse issues. Single parent support group topics include adjusting to divorce or death of a spouse, helping children adjust to the loss of a parent and/or divorce, establishing new relationships, behavior management for children, trusting and being trustworthy, time management and strengthening coping skills. The blended families group includes a sampling of topics such as multiple and differences in relationships, parental authority, holiday and special occasion issues, communication issues, and stress. Finally, the youth development series deals with such issues as self-worth, values, balancing the issues of independence vs. conforming to authority, physical, emotional and sexual changes taking place during adolescence, establishing and maintaining loving relationships, drugs, alcohol, teen pregnancies and so forth.

Julie Baumgardner presented next, discussing the First Things First program that began in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1997. This grassroots effort was spurred by several startling facts, including:

- Tennessee's high divorce rate – almost one third of Hamilton County couples have been divorced at one time;
- Nearly 1,000 children are born out of wedlock in Hamilton County;
- Research conducted by FTF revealed that 25 percent of Hamilton County middle and high school students have had four or more sexual partners;
- 4 out of 10 children will go to bed tonight without their biological father in the home. The average father spends less than 10 minutes a day one-to-one with his child; and
- Social scientists have demonstrated that divorce, out-of-wedlock births, and lack of fathering contribute to poverty, poor achievement in school and throughout a person's life, greater crime, increased drug abuse, higher death rates, poorer health, and many other things that are hurting the community.

First Things First came together in 1997 and established three strategic goals:

1. Reduce the number of divorces filed in Hamilton County by 30 percent, while at the same time strengthening existing marriages.
2. Reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies in Hamilton County by 30 percent over three years.
3. Increase sufficient involvement of fathers in raising their children by 30 percent.

Ms. Baumgardner noted that FTF is a prevention-oriented organization – must look at the big picture in terms of offering services for everyone (e.g., marriage education classes, boot camp for new dads, etc.). Everyone is the target market. The approach used in Chattanooga is multi-faceted, multi-sector. There is a need to talk with everyone in the community who are willing to listen. Another important point that Ms. Baumgardner made is that you must insure that the messenger for promoting this work must be credible with the community. In accomplishing the work, Ms. Baumgardner cited four strategic actions:

1. To use credible research to identify significant problems facing Chattanooga, emphasizing families and youth;
2. To identify solutions that are based on traditional values and principles; to measure the effectiveness of these solutions based on credible, empirical data; to evaluate the impact of these potential solutions;
3. To build broad public support for values-based solutions through advocacy, communication and collaboration rather than providing direct client services; and
4. To empower and equip local leaders and professionals who work with families and who are also promoting values-based solutions, and to provide support that advances their effectiveness.

To date, FTF has collaborated with more than 60 local and national organizations in promoting its initiative.

Mary Myrick discussed her work as president of Public Strategies, Inc., in working with the Department of Human Services and others on the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, and the evolution of that effort. Without repeating much of what has been said by previous speakers about the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI), Ms. Myrick discussed the creation of the initiative as a bold step taken by Governor Keating in 1999, suggesting that the state commit to reducing the divorce rate by one-third by the year 2010. In that respect, the governor specifically charged the state with the following:

- Committing to a community collaboration and broad involvement through a multi-sector strategy.
- Committing significant funding in partnership with the Department of Human Services.
- Providing on-going leadership and operational management to keep marriage on the public agenda.
- Committing to delivering meaningful and relevant services that provide couples with the skills and tools needed to form and sustain healthy marriages.

In setting up “family strengthening/healthy marriage” coalitions, Ms. Myrick provided some very practical points about what matters when organizing such efforts. They include the following:

1. Mission matters – need a clear vision.
2. Leadership matters.
3. Developing win-win partnerships.
4. Being strategic matters.
5. The messenger and the words matter.
6. Pick one thing and do it well in a statewide initiative.
7. Assumptions can trip you up.
8. Learning from each other matters.
9. Diversity matters and makes you stronger – start with a group that shares your vision; then broaden your effort. It is possible to have common goals and shared differences.
10. Local projects matter – we are more different than we dare to believe and more alike than we dare to claim.

Ms. Myrick presented the attendees with a map outlining, that as of October 2002, the State had trained 459 individuals in the PREP curriculum and trained 483 individuals in the

referral/overview tier process. Nearly ½ of the 77 Oklahoma counties have held County Team meetings (as of October 2002). Also, during Ms. Myrick’s presentation, a handout was made available to the workshop attendees, which suggested ten things that one can do now to help put the marriage on the public agenda. They include:

1. Start today. Okay, tomorrow. But the important thing is to start.
2. Commit to learning about and understanding the field of marriage education and marriage research.
3. Use this conference information.
4. Establish your own Marriage Initiative Planning Team, formally or informally.
5. Review agency programs with an eye towards marriage.
6. Identify other government agencies, community partners and faith communities who might be interested in joining a broad-based marriage initiative effort.
7. Gather marriage data for your state.
8. Work with your Marriage Initiative team to develop a strategy to educate the public, stimulate debate, discuss goals, and put forward some constructive proposals.
9. Develop a big vision and manageable action plan.
10. Share lessons learned.

Evaluations were completed for the various workshops in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. This workshop was attended by approximately 70 participants. Twenty-nine participants completed evaluations. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes that ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters’ scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Rick Kelley	4.7	4.6	4.6	4.2
Julie Baumgardner	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.1
Mary Myrick	4.5	4.2	4.5	4.0

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 – strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the workshop’s participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of the “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” Initiative 4.2
- Information in initiating or expanding the role of “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” projects in the delivery of social services throughout government programs was provided 4.2
- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting “Healthy Marriages/Responsible Fatherhood” 4.0

The session's participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional comments. In terms of what the workshop's participants found most helpful included such things as the use of Mr. Kelley's "Chickasaw Nation" handbook (3 commenters), Oklahoma's experience with designing a marriage initiative, the importance of fostering strong family relationships through partnerships and collaborations (2 commenters), and Ms Myrick's practical ways to get started on a project working with families/healthy marriages. There were other general comments such as "lots of helpful information was provided," "topics are informative and needed," and "speakers were very motivational and knowledgeable." One final comment made under "other" included, "Good to see marriage initiative being discussed. You are making a difference."

Implementing Marriage Services: A View from Partners

Moderator: *Kendy Cox, Account Executive with Public Strategies, Inc. – Oklahoma City, OK*

Presenters: *Farilyn Ballard, Chief Operating Officer, Okla. Department of Human Services*
Rachel Neal, Marriage Initiative Coordinator, Oklahoma State University
Cooperative Extension Service
Marcia Smith, Executive Director, Oklahoma Coalition against Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault
Laurie Gassaway, Family/Community Partnership Specialist, Cookson Hills
Community Action Agency Head Start Program
Reverend George Young, Holy Temple Baptist Church, Oklahoma City

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2002 Time: 1:30p.m – 3:00p.m. Room: Landmark D

On Thursday afternoon, the fourth of a series of five mega-sessions/workshops was presented that addressed the "Responsible Fatherhood/Healthy Marriage" key priorities. The workshop was moderated by Kendy Cox of Public Strategies, Inc. During this session, participants heard from a variety of government partners, including representatives from State agencies, community-based organizations, and the faith community. These partners described their experiences with family-friendly programs and marriage services.

Farilyn Ballard began the presentation by giving some background of the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative (OMI) and specifically the role of the Department of Human Services. Ms. Ballard mentioned that three of the four TANF goals relate to family formation issues. Thus, it was decided in 1999 to set aside \$10 million of unspent TANF funds, which were to be spent over a five year period, to help carry out the OMI. Thus far, approximately \$2.4 million of the \$10 million has been spent on the project. Certainly, the mission of the various DHS programs is to help individuals and families in need to create safe and independent lives. Thus, it seemed to be a natural fit that one key to this goal was to help create and sustain "healthy marriages." The agency felt it was appropriate to use TANF funds to support people who are married or who want to be married by delivering the skills based curriculum to help couples develop and sustain healthy relationships. Farilyn noted that the agency made a decision to build capacity through

the offering of an empirically-tested program, i.e., PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program). Ms. Ballard said that the agency certainly could not have begun to do this without lots of partners. The agency first entered into a contract with Public Strategies, Inc., who was charged with general oversight and operation of the initiative. To date, over 500 individuals have been trained to deliver the PREP (marriage education) services. This training is free to the individuals; however, they must agree to do at least four workshops in their communities without charge. To date, over 2,500 Oklahomans have completed the PREP workshops. One of the challenges, noted by Ms. Ballard, was the issue of reaching out to low-income families. As the low-income folks are just trying to survive, the thought is that PREP may not be their number one priority. Farilyn also addressed the issue of working with lots of single-parent households in the low-income TANF population. She noted that training does not have to be given only to those who are married. The challenge is to make the training as meaningful to different groups as possible. The state is now looking at expanding the training opportunities for high school students. Bottom line is that the state needs to focus on the issue of child well-being. As research shows that children are better off if they grow up in two parent healthy marriage situations, that's the reason for the initiative. Again, at this point the State is looking to making some changes in the curriculum in order to meet the different needs that exist within different groups – high school PREP, Hispanic PREP, moving PREP to hospitals, etc.

Rachel Neal, Marriage Initiative Coordinator with the Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service, described how extension services in Oklahoma works with public school systems, TANF agencies, and the Department of Corrections to deliver PREP workshops. Ms. Neal acknowledged that it is a challenge to enroll participants in the PREP classes, and she recommended forming relationships with established groups, such as schools. She also mentioned that the Extension pays for child care services while classes are occurring. Ms. Neal also talked about the positive results of the PREP program, particularly in the schools. High school students have said they are using what they've learned in the classes in their relationships with their parents and others. In order to expand the number of PREP classes being offered, the extension service hopes to partner with the business community and other social programs.

Marcia Smith, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Coalition against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, described her Coalition's role in the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. Ms. Smith said the Coalition was initially skeptical about involvement with the State's marriage initiative. According to Ms. Smith, many staff members feared for women's safety if they were forced to stay in abusive marital situations. Ms. Smith noted that Oklahoma is ranked eighth in the nation for murders committed against women by men. Most domestic violence occurs between married couples or those whose relationships have recently divorced. However, Ms. Smith explained that the Coalition became involved in the marriage initiative when it was made clear that domestic violence would not be tolerated and women should not live in homes where domestic violence was present. Also, Ms. Smith noted that the Coalition knew that the Marriage Initiative was going to take place with or without the Coalition's presence, so they thought it was strategic that they become involved. Ms. Smith also noted that the agency had a reputation for sharing the Coalition's goals and issues; thus, they felt comfortable becoming part of the initiative. As a result of this partnership, the Coalition has assisted the State with training. Coalition staff members teach workshop leaders and others how to recognize domestic violence and how to provide referrals to domestic violence resources. Domestic Violence staff have also grown from

this partnership and identified situations where PREP workshops can be offered in some of the Domestic Violence shelters. All in all, it has been a good give and take situation.

Laurie Gassaway, Family/Community Partnership Specialist for the Cookson Hills Community Action Agency Head Start Program in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, talked about Head Start being the newest partner to the OMI effort. She noted that about eight months ago, she participated in the PREP training. To date, about fourteen staff members from the Head Start program have been trained in PREP. She is in the process of developing a county plan in Cherokee County along with partners from the clergy, DHS, Health Department counselors, OSU Extension, Domestic Violence, etc.

Reverend George Young of the Holy Temple Baptist Church in Oklahoma City described his church’s involvement in Oklahoma’s Marriage Initiative. Reverend Young’s church was one of the first African-American churches involved with the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative. Reverend Young teaches PREP classes that are sometimes held at the church but also at local housing projects and other venues. Reverend Young recommended pastor involvement as a strategy to increase African-American involvement in marriage initiatives and shared that his involvement with the OMI has changed his ministry. He concluded that marriage is the foundation of having good communities.

The presenters noted that Oklahoma’s Marriage Initiative does not force people to get married. Instead, the focus is on stabilizing and improving marriages. The presenters also pointed out that community partner involvement is critical to getting a marriage initiative started. Churches are important partners because many citizens say they will turn to their church to support and strengthen their marriages. Data reveal that 75% of marriages in Oklahoma occur in the church. The presenters also identified several ongoing challenges such as enrollment and retention in PREP classes. Also, adaptations of the PREP curriculum are planned in the future, as noted in Ms. Ballard’s presentation.

Evaluations were completed for this workshop in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. The session was attended by 65 to 70 participants. Thirty-two participants completed evaluations. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes the ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters’ scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Farilyn Ballard	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.1
Rachel Neal	4.3	4.4	4.6	3.9
Marcia Smith	4.7	4.6	4.7	4.1
Laurie Gassaway	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.0
Rev. George Young	4.7	4.8	4.7	4.3

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the workshop’s participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of the “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” Initiative 4.5
- Information in initiating or expanding the role of “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” projects in the delivery of social services throughout government programs was provided 4.4
- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting “Healthy Marriages/Responsible Fatherhood” 4.3

The session’s participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional comments. In terms of helpfulness, the respondents provided comments including “how different agencies collaborate to promote healthy marriages,” “PREP (3 commenters),” “successful partnering among groups,” “enjoyed Rev. Young’s message,” “how to reach the community in a positive and effective way,” and “great knowing that Head Start is getting in on the initiative.” Other comments included the following: (1) very comprehensive; (2) information was great, especially PREP, (3) would like the presenters to have stood,” (4) great panel combination, (5) speakers’ commitment is evident, and (6) information very beneficial.

A Team Approach to TANF: Multi-Disciplinary Teams

Presenters: *Teresa Tudor, Illinois Depart. of Human Services, Div. Of Community Operations*
Jeanne Dwyer, Illinois Department of Human Services, Region II
Patricia Dames-Schuster, Nurse/MDT Member, Will County, Illinois

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2003 Time: 1:30p.m. – 3:00p.m. Room: Cumberland B

This session was conceived and planned in collaboration with the ACF Regional Office’s Child Welfare team. One of the purposes of the session was to demonstrate the linkage between TANF clients and child welfare issues, particularly with respect to ‘medical issues’ (including substance abuse and psychological), which have implications on children’s safety, permanency and wellbeing. Identification of this ‘best practice’ project occurred through the Child Welfare Team’s community-based efforts across ACF regional lines.

Teresa Tudor, from the Illinois state office gave an overview of the Illinois TANF environment, spoke to the original conceptualization of the Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT) project, including expanded roles for caseworkers, enhanced assessment and service planning and broader services in local offices. She also addressed piloting of the concept in early 2002 and ‘nuts and bolts’ of planning and implementation.

Jeanne Dwyer, covered Illinois regional implementation, management and monitoring. Common barriers identified closely “mirror” issues confronted in the child welfare system:

- frequent moves
- child support
- incarcerated parents
- substance abuse
- mental health
- domestic violence
- legal/felony convictions
- lack of extended family support
- health

Patricia Dames-Schuster, a nurse member of one of the local MD Teams gave a ‘front line’ perspective using case-examples including:

- Customer (client) profiles
- MDT team actions
- Outcomes

The importance of joint ‘staffing’ of cases, home visits, and interface with the Division of Children and Family Services (child protection) was highlighted.

Evaluations were completed for each of the Thursday workshops in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. The session was attended by approximately 45 participants. Fourteen participants completed evaluations. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes that ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters’ scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Teresa Tudor	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.5
Jeanne Dwyer	4.9	4.8	4.9	4.3
Patricia Dames-Schuster	4.9	4.7	5	4.2

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three outcome issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the workshop’s participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of multi-disciplinary teams in promoting self-sufficiency 4.1
- Information on addressing the needs of multi-barrier families was provided . . . 4.3
- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting self-sufficiency 4.2

The workshop's participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional comments. Under the "most helpful" item, attendees shared some of the following comments:

- Would like to see more staff from our state (TX) offices in TANF emphasize/train regions to use the MDT approach.
- It was good to know that people are helping people served and the help they need
- How developed and planned
- Information on identifying barriers and resources

Additional "open ended" comments were revealing:

- You are to be highly commended for the frequency and depth of contact/interaction with all customers (clients)
- GREAT INFORMATION- very interesting concept
- Good luck! Hope LA can copy!
- Well done!
- May God bless you for caring and loving your job and having a desire to help despite the odds
- If state offices mandate that you work/collaborate w/ other agencies it MAY happen.

As noted in the evaluation comments, several states (LA and TX) expressed interest in potential replication of the MDT concept. The handouts of the session's Power Point presentation included 'contact' phone numbers for all the panelists and Ms. Tudor offered individualized "technical assistance" to those interested in additional information.

Coming Together in a Good Way – A Native Path in Finding Healthy Relationships

Moderator: *Larry Brendel, Program Manager, ACF, Region VI – Dallas*

Presenters: *Gordon and Pam James, Culture2Culture, Shelton, Washington*

Date: Thursday, January 23, 2003

Time: 3:30p.m. – 5:00p.m.

Room: Landmark D

The final session in the series of five "Responsible Fatherhood/Healthy Marriage" sessions focused on the Native American perspective to this issue. This workshop focused on participants learning about how to go about developing the skills necessary for healthy, loving and successful marriages from a Native American perspective and is based on the presenters' book, *Coming Together in a Good Way – A Native Path in Finding Healthy Relationships*. Together, Mr. and Mrs. James teach marriage enrichment workshops for Native American couples.

Gordon and Pam James began the session introducing themselves, noting that Pam had come from the State of Washington, Pam from the Colville Tribe and Gordon from the Skokomish Tribe. There are 29 federally recognized tribes in the State of Washington. Mr. James noted similarities and differences between Tribal governments and State governments. A brief

discussion was held around the equality of power and authority between governments and the comparison between Tribal chairmen and State governors.

The James' talked about the necessity of keeping the teachings and stories from ancestors alive through generations—how to take elements of a cultural past and keep the identity alive in current day. Some discussion took place about the Native American medicine wheel: north representing mind; east representing body; south representing spirit; and west representing culture/community. Also, the four quadrants of the medicine wheel represent infant (fire), youth (water), adult (earth) and elder (sky/wind).

Much of the discussion centered around the concept of hunters (men) vs. gatherers (women). During the discussion, there was a good exchange of information about the “relationship road map” exercise in terms of discussing needs of your partner (e.g., intellectual, educational background, physical, spiritual, emotional, sexual, financial, cultural, family-wise, etc.). Much of the information was dedicated to sharing a message of wellness, healing and developing healthy lifestyles, and the importance of keeping cultural traditions alive.

Evaluations were completed for this session in order to measure outcomes, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the speakers and how they related to the audience. The session was attended by approximately 15 conference participants. Nine participants completed evaluations. In terms of audience receptiveness to the speakers, the following table notes the ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 in the areas of preparation, effectiveness, knowledge of subject matter and engagement of the audience. The audience was asked to rate the various areas on a scale of 1 to 5, by placing an appropriate number in each of the boxes, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Below, you will find a composite of the presenters' scores.

	Prepared	Effective	Knowledgeable in subject area	Engaged Audience
Gordon James	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.9
Pam James	5.0	4.9	5.0	4.9

Regarding outcomes, we also asked the audience to rate (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) three issues. The following restates those issues with the composite score of the workshop's participants.

- Content of the presentation enhanced my understanding of the “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” Initiative 4.7
- Information in initiating or expanding the role of “Healthy Marriage/Responsible Fatherhood” projects in the delivery of social services throughout government programs was provided 4.6
- My organization will use information provided at this conference to improve or expand services provided to our customers in the arena of promoting “Healthy Marriages/Responsible Fatherhood” 4.7

The workshop's participants were also asked to note what information they found to be most helpful from the presentations, as well as offered the opportunity to make any additional

comments. With regard to helpfulness, there were two comments: (1) realizing differences and the need for balance and (2) cultural differences with regard to this initiative. Other comments made primarily suggested that participants enjoyed the perspective that was brought to the issue from a Native American couple. One commenter noted that the materials will be very useful to promote the “Marriage” movement in Tribal communities. Another commenter indicated that he would use the materials in a men’s group of which he is involved. A final comment noted that the workshop succeeded in offering a very interesting cultural perspective.