



# Healthy Marriage Forum

March 18, 2004 | Louisiana State University

## MEETING SUMMARY

The Welfare Peer Technical Assistance Network is a Federal initiative that highlights the good work of other States, Tribes, and counties. This effort provides them with opportunities to learn from one another through peer-to-peer information sharing among States, Tribes, and communities. This Federal Project is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Family Assistance (OFA). The Network recently held a Louisiana Healthy Marriage Forum in Baton Rouge, Louisiana on March 18, 2004. In support of the Forum and its success, Joneal S. Kirby, Commissioner, Governor's Commission on Marriage for the State of Louisiana, submitted a written evaluation of the information and resources shared during this TA event. This evaluative feedback was received by Diane Sollee, Director, Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples Education, LLC (CMFCE), and submitted to Smart Marriages ([www.smartmarriages.com](http://www.smartmarriages.com)) listserv participants. Commissioner Kirby's comments, a summary of participant comments, and a Forum agenda are highlighted below:

I just returned from Baton Rouge where I spent the day participating in the Louisiana Healthy Marriage Forum as a member of the Governor's Commission on Marriage as well as a marriage and family therapist and educator. There were representatives and speakers from HHS - DSS, ACF as well as community-based organizations and faith-based organizations around the state. State Representative and Speaker Pro Tem, Sharon Weston-Broome, initiated contact with John Horejsi, TANF Program Specialist from HHS (Wash. D.C.) and with the logistical support of LSU Law School's Katherine Spaht, and others, we had a first-class marriage movement meeting. We were educated about the funding that is available and will become available and what types of programs are eligible for funding. Experts were program developers, researchers, grant writers, and veterans of the movement (have we been around long enough to have veterans?!) like Mary Myrick of Oklahoma and Grant Collins of OFA in D.C. I personally and professionally was inspired, motivated and very encouraged by what Louisiana is already doing to strengthen marriages and families in our state. The CBO presentations were passionately delivered by competent and conscientious individuals who are leading the fight for marriage in their communities - folks like Wilma Terry and Dena Morrison put their muscle behind their mouth, working hard for families. Bill Coffin, Wade Horn's Assistant in marriage education, wrapped up the day with a invigorating challenge to all of us to pick up the pace and get marriage education to everyone in the state who wants to participate.

Our Marriage Commission work has often seemed slow with almost imperceptible movement, but here we are now, stepping out with some very real and tangible efforts towards strengthening our families and protecting our children. I wanted you and the e-list to know of our ongoing efforts. We have only just begun. Louisiana's Marriage Movement is on the map.

## Participant Comments

- Learning about marriage related programs in Louisiana was most helpful.
- Everything was terrific!
- The Louisiana based presentations were useful. I'm now aware of what is taking place locally.
- Great opportunity to meet with Federal, State and local officials!
- I enjoyed the opportunity to meet more organizations and people who are involved or planning to get involved in the Healthy Marriage Initiative.
- Thanks for clarifying the expectations of the Healthy Marriage Initiative.
- The State initiatives presented were most helpful.

## Agenda

<b>8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.</b>	<b>Registration and Continental Breakfast</b>
<b>9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.</b>	<p><b>Welcome and Acknowledgements</b></p> <p><i>Leon R. McCowan, Regional Administrator, Region VI Administration for Children and Families (ACF) U.S. Department of Health &amp; Human Services (HHS)</i></p> <p><i>Sharon Weston-Broome, State Representative Speaker Pro Tem of the Louisiana House of Representatives Chairman of the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family</i></p> <p><i>John Horejsi, TANF Program Specialist Office of Family Assistance (OFA), ACF</i></p> <p><i>Ann S. Williamson, Secretary, Louisiana Department of Social Services</i></p>
<b>9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.</b>	<p><b>The Importance of Marriage Strengthening Programs</b></p> <p><i>Grant E. Collins II, Chief Program Officer, OFA, ACF</i></p> <p>Senior-level Federal staff will present the intended goals and outcomes of the President's Healthy Marriage Initiative. This session will address the Federal resources available to assist States, communities, and localities in creatively designing and implementing strategies that promote two-parent family formation.</p> <p>It will highlight the benefits of marriage promotion and strengthening on children, families, and communities. To encourage an interactive experience, a Q &amp; A session will be provided.</p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> <i>Leon R. McCowan, Regional Administrator, Region VI, ACF</i></p>
<b>10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.</b>	<b>BREAK</b>
<b>11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.</b>	<b>The Importance of Healthy Marriage Research and Evaluation Models</b>

*Robin Dion, Senior Researcher, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*

This session will highlight current research and evaluation models that examine marriage related issues. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., will provide an overview of their current marriage technical assistance, research, and evaluation efforts in Louisiana.

**Moderator:** *Bill Coffin, Special Assistant for Marriage Education, ACF*

**12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m.**

**BREAK**

**12:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.**  
*(Working Lunch)*

**I. Louisiana Department of Social Services Video Presentation: Marriage Matters**

*Sharon Weston-Broome, State Representative, Speaker Pro Tem of the Louisiana House of Representatives, Chairman of the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family*

**II. State Initiatives: Panel Presentation (Child Support, Child Welfare, Community-Based Non-Profits)**

*Anthony Ellis, Program Manager, Louisiana Department of Social Services, Office of Community Services (Child Welfare)*

*Robbie Endris, Acting Division Director, Support Enforcement Services Division Louisiana Department of Social Services (Child Support)*

*Dena Morrison, Executive Director, Family Road of Greater Baton Rouge, Inc.*

*Gail Tate, Executive Director, Louisiana Family Council*

*Wilma Terry, Director Southside Development Corporation*

This panel will highlight current activities and initiatives concerning the development, support, and maintenance of healthy marriages in Louisiana. Presenters will share their diverse perspectives and strategies in promoting healthy marriages and its benefits. A period of Q & A will be provided.

**Moderator:** *Lisa Woodruff-White, Deputy Secretary, Louisiana Department of Social Services*

**2:00 p.m. – 2:10 p.m.**

**BREAK**

**2:10 p.m. – 3:10 p.m.**

**Healthy Marriage Education Programs**

*Bill Coffin, Special Assistant for Marriage Education, ACF*

This session will discuss current healthy marriage education programs and the benefits to States and families. Valuable resources will be shared to assist States and communities in the development and examination of educational models and curricula. A Q & A session will be provided.

**Moderator:** *John Horejsi, TANF Program Specialist, OFA, ACF*

**3:10 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

**Closing Remarks**

*Sharon Weston-Broome, State Representative, Speaker Pro Tem of the Louisiana House of Representatives, Chairman of the Louisiana Commission on Marriage and Family*

*John Horejsi, TANF Program Specialist, OFA, ACF*

*For more information concerning this TA event, please contact Chandra Robinson at 301-270-0841 ext. 215.*