



Supporting Families: Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Programming in Tribal TANF

Tribal TANF Learning & Action Series: Session 2 Summary

This companion product accompanies Session 2 of the Tribal TANF Learning & Action Series, *Programming to Build Strong Families and Promote Economic Independence*. You may access the recording and slides on the [Tribal TANF Learning & Action Series](#) webpage. This resource summarizes the session's key takeaways about how Tribal TANF programs might integrate Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) and Responsible Fatherhood (RF) programming into their services. It also shares resources introduced during the session.

BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES THROUGH CULTURALLY GROUNDED, FAMILY-CENTERED SERVICES

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) and Responsible Fatherhood (RF) program approaches may help Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs strengthen family relationships, support economic independence, and promote child well-being.¹ Whether implemented as standalone services or integrated into existing programming, these approaches align with Tribal TANF's goals of supporting self-sufficiency and healthy, stable families. HMRE and RF programming can complement Tribal TANF by working to strengthen couple and co-parent relationships, support fathers, prepare youth for healthy relationships, and build on Tribal culture to promote stable family dynamics.

Overview of [HMRE and RF programs](#)

HMRE programs serve couples or individuals and teach skills for creating healthy, safe, and stable relationships based on curriculum that organizations can select themselves and adapt as necessary.

RF programs serve fathers and father figures and aim to help them become more effective parents, healthy partners or co-parents, and economically stable providers so they can support their children's development and family stability.

HMRF is an umbrella term for HMRE and RF programs.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTEGRATING HMRE AND RF APPROACHES INTO TRIBAL TANF

There are different opportunities for Tribal TANF programs to integrate HMRE and RF services. Consider which opportunities are best suited for your program based on families' needs and the existing services that your program offers.

HMRE and RF Approach and Family Needs	Potential Programming to Support Families
Strengthen Family Stability and Well-Being: Families may face relationship stress, co-parenting challenges, conflict, or social isolation that affect household stability and child well-being.	Healthy relationship education, communication skills, conflict resolution, stress management, family goal setting, and family wellness workshops.
Increase Father Engagement and Co-Parenting: Fathers and father figures may face barriers to involvement with their children or may need support navigating parenting and co-parenting relationships.	Fatherhood support groups, parenting education, child development activities, co-parenting workshops, mentorship with other Tribal fathers and Elders, and employment and workforce supports.

¹ Administration for Children and Families. (2025, September 29). *Healthy Marriage & Responsible Fatherhood*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://acf.gov/ofa/programs/healthy-marriage-responsible-fatherhood>



HMRE and RF Approach and Family Needs	Potential Programming to Support Families
Prepare Youth for Healthy Relationships: Young adults may benefit from skills and support that prepare them for healthy relationships, future parenting roles, and long-term family stability.	Healthy relationship education, financial literacy education, communication skills, decision making, goal setting, and youth leadership opportunities.
Build on Culture and Community Strengths: Families may seek opportunities to reconnect with cultural traditions, strengthen intergenerational relationships, and reinforce community-based sources of support.	Elder-led family gatherings, cultural camps, traditional parenting teachings, intergenerational mentorship, or community cultural events.

PUTTING HMRE and RF INTO PRACTICE

There are different mechanisms that Tribal TANF programs may use to put HMRE and RF into practice.

- **Integrate HMRE and RF concepts into existing Tribal TANF services.** Integrate healthy relationship and family-strengthening services and techniques into existing TANF case management, family support, and prevention activities. For example, TANF programs could teach relationship skills, such as [active listening](#), to strengthen family communication and parent and co-parent relationships.
- **Partner with existing HMRE and RF providers.** Partner with the Administration for Children and Families' [current HMRF grantees](#) or other organizations that provide HMRE and RF services to connect Tribal TANF participants with relationship education, responsible fatherhood, parenting, and family strengthening services. Partnerships can include referral agreements, co-hosted workshops, shared case management, or incorporating HMRE and RF staff into Tribal TANF events.
- **Fund TANF-integrated HMRE and RF services using Tribal TANF resources.** Use flexible funding opportunities to support HMRE and RF programs that advance TANF's statutory purposes. HMRE and RF programming includes services that support workforce training, job placement, and financial management and improve relationship quality, parenting, and co-parenting skills.
- **Apply for federal HMRE and RF grant funding.** Tribal-led organizations, Tribal governments, and Tribal consortia may be eligible to apply for HMRE and RF funding. These HMRE and RF grants can support healthy relationships, parenting, responsible fatherhood, and youth programming that complement existing Tribal TANF services. The [current grant cycle](#) was awarded in September 2025 and will end in September 2030.

Supplemental Resources

- [Improving healthy marriage and relationship education \(HMRE\) programs for unmarried couples with children \(2020\)](#): A report that provides an overview of strategies to improve HMRE programs for unmarried couples.
- [Pathways-to-outcomes snapshots: Tools for building evidence for responsible fatherhood programs \(2020\)](#): Short profiles of different RF approaches and logic models for understanding their expected outcomes.
- [Strengthening the implementation and evaluation of healthy marriage and relationship education programs for youth: Considerations from four recent impact studies \(2022\)](#): A research brief that discusses approaches for strengthening the implementation and evaluation of HMRE programs for youth.
- [Parents and Children Together \(PACT\) evaluation \(n.d.\)](#): An overview of findings, sub-studies, and webinars from a federal evaluation of implementation and effects of HMRE and RF programs.
- [Strategies to support healthy relationships for American Indian and Alaska Native fathers \(2022\)](#): A research brief that discusses strategies for strong fatherhood programs within American Indian and Alaska Native communities.