

Better Family Life: Marriage and Relationship Education and Workforce Investment Program Highlight

The marriage and relationship education field strives to equip couples and individuals with skills to foster healthy relationships, with the ultimate goal of promoting child well-being. The Better Family Life (BFL) program in St. Louis, MO, and others similar to it are partnering with an array of social service systems to extend their reach to individuals and couples these systems touch (such as those who fall under the Workforce Investment Act or WIA). Lessons are emerging about both how such partnerships can be successfully forged and the benefits that accrue to the service systems and their clients. This Program Highlight offers an overview of an organization that provides healthy marriage programming as a complement to job preparation services.

Program Mission:

Strengthen individual relationships, teach effective communication, and improve decision-making skills for people both in and out of relationships.

Background:

In 2006 BFL was awarded a Healthy Marriage grant to provide instruction to clients who were receiving job readiness, job search, and job placement services. The grant was pursued because BFL recognized that improving interpersonal relationship skills would be central to the employment training and assistance their participants were receiving. BFL's employment program was funded with a mix of TANF and Workforce Investment Act funds.

Program Highlights:

1. Consistency – BFL uses the same staff to teach both healthy marriage and job readiness classes. Having consistency in staffing between the two programs builds trust and comfort between the participants and the agency.
2. Communication – The partnership between the HM program and WIA works because each party communicates its goals and plans to the other. This communication allows for both programs to complement each other and ensures that services are not duplicated.
3. Outcome measurement – Program outcomes are frequently reviewed to ensure that program goals are met. These outcomes are especially useful for making ongoing improvements in participant retention. Outcomes measured included, but were not limited to, relationship satisfaction, communication skills, and recognizing abuse.

For more information:

To learn more about [Better Family Life](http://www.betterfamilylife.org), call 314-367-3440.