

Community Action Kentucky: Marriage and Relationship Education and Head Start Program Highlight

The marriage and relationship education (MRE) field strives to equip couples and individuals with skills to foster healthy relationships, with the ultimate goal of promoting child well-being. Community Action Kentucky, and other community action agencies, serve Head Start families and other families in or at-risk of poverty. Lessons are emerging about how MRE can be successfully implemented through this service system for the variety of clients served by community action agencies. This Program Highlight provides an overview of how Community Action Kentucky has integrated healthy marriage services into its Head Start program.

Program Mission:

To help families become emotionally and economically self-sufficient by serving both individuals and couples

Background:

Community Action Kentucky received a Promoting Healthy Marriages grant for its healthy marriage program in 2005 from the federal Administration for Children and Families Office of Community Services. Community Action Kentucky's staff coordinates trainings and provides technical assistance to its member agencies' Head Start programs, as part of its statewide healthy marriage initiative.

Program Highlights:

1. Expertise in bringing families together – Head Start has a long record of accomplishment of working with the parents of the children it serves. Parents are familiar with the Head Start setting, which reduces their hesitancy toward trying a new program. The healthy marriage programs are also able to build on the trust that has already been established with the staff at the Head Start site.
2. Seamless interaction – To the parents it serves, the healthy marriage program is seen as just another service that Head Start provides. Participants do not feel that they are dealing with two different programs. This is especially important because many of the couples are worried about the stigma of attending a relationship education program.
3. Addressing participant needs from the beginning – A series of four focus groups were conducted across the state to gauge community needs on which to base the program. The entire community was invited to share thoughts about why people were not married and why those who were married were getting divorced.

For more information:

Visit [Community Action Kentucky](http://www.communityactionkentucky.org) or call 1-800-456-3452.