

Building Healthy Marriages: Marriage and Relationship Education and Child Welfare 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 Building Healthy Marriages (BHM) program in Weld County, Colorado, and others, is partnering with an array of social service systems, like child welfare, to extend its reach to individuals and couples these systems touch. Lessons are emerging about how such partnerships can be successfully forged, and the benefits that accrue to the service systems as well as their clients.

Program Mission:

To help all members of the community, whether or not they are in a relationship, improve their communication and listening skills and manage their relationship expectations

Background:

The partnership between Building Healthy Marriages and the Division of Child Welfare began in 2006. BHM and the Division of Child Welfare are both part of the Weld County Department of Human Services (DHS).

Program Highlights:

1. Administrators collaborated – BHM found an individual within the Division of Child Welfare who championed the collaboration. This person's support helped to sustain and strengthen the partnership. The BHM/child welfare collaboration was also supported and encouraged by Weld County DHS administrators. They made the collaboration known within their organization by having the BHM program manager speak to the child welfare staff about the program.
2. Child welfare case managers benefitted – The child welfare case managers, like many in the nation, have large caseloads. Because the families in their caseload were participating in the BHM program, case managers were able to learn additional information about the families and consequently serve the family better. The case management process enhanced the MRE program to provide more comprehensive family services.
3. Families were equipped to manage the child welfare system – Couples can be intimidated by a child welfare investigation of their family; BHM staff helped to ease their fears and spent time explaining various operations and dispelling myths. BHM taught the families how to self-advocate by speaking up about what they can and cannot do.

For more information:

To learn more about [Building Healthy Marriages](http://www.healthymarriageinfo.org) call 970-304-6578.