

PROMOTING SAFETY

A Resource Packet for Marriage and Relationship Educators
and Program Administrators

Dear Readers ~

The information and recommendations included in this *Resource Packet* have been drawn from our work over the past several years with domestic violence advocates and healthy marriage and relationship programs across the country. The five Guides reflect what we have learned to date about building effective community partnerships between marriage and relationship programs and the domestic violence advocacy community, as well as about developing domestic violence protocols, screening and assessing program participants for domestic violence issues, and responding to domestic violence disclosures. While each Guide stands alone, it also complements the other Guides in the *Resource Packet*.

These Guides should not be considered the final word. They will continually evolve and improve with your critique and feedback and as we learn more. We are interested in hearing from you about how these Guides are helpful, what did not respond to your particular program design or community realities, and where you need additional information.

- If you are a *Healthy Marriage and Relationship Program Administrator*, these Guides can be used to introduce domestic violence issues to your staff and volunteers or to support training conducted by domestic violence experts from your community. Each Guide stresses the importance of building effective partnerships with domestic violence programs in your community.
- If you are a *Healthy Marriage and Relationship Educator or program staff*, the Guides will help identify issues and approaches that will be key as you work directly with individuals and couples in your community.
- If you work at a *Domestic Violence Advocacy Program*, these materials can be used to supplement the training and technical assistance you provide to healthy marriage and relationship programs, as well as to educate advocates within your program about how domestic violence issues arise within marriage and relationship education settings. They can also support your efforts to build respectful and effective partnerships with marriage and education programs.
- If you are a *Funder or Policymaker*, this *Resource Packet* will provide an overview of the domestic violence issues that require thoughtful consideration and site-specific responses within healthy marriage and relationship education programs and initiatives.

As with other resources, if these Guides remain on the shelf collecting dust, they will be of limited use to you. How you utilize each of the Guides will depend on the size of your program, the types of staff and volunteers you have, whether your program is free-standing or imbedded in a larger program, as well as other factors.

Here are some recommendations and suggestions for making full use of this domestic violence *Resource Packet*:

- ***Give these Guides Real Time and Attention***
For example, you could request that all current staff and volunteers read each Guide (all at once or over a specific time period). New staff and volunteers should be asked to read them as part of their initial orientation period. To enhance learning, you could provide time at staff meetings or ongoing staff/volunteer development sessions to discuss the issues raised by the Guides and how they relate to the healthy marriage and relationship services your program provides. Invite and keep track of the questions and problems the Guides raise for staff or volunteers. Since these Guides will not answer all your questions – nor are they meant to – we urge you to seek additional training or technical assistance from local or state domestic violence experts and to invite community or state domestic violence advocates to join you in discussion sessions.
- ***Use these Guides to Assess and Improve Your Program***
The information and recommendations included in the Guides can be used as a framework to review your current practices and protocols and identify ways that they can be improved. Are there steps or issues that you have missed in your process that you might want to go back and address? Again, invite local or state domestic violence experts to participate in this critique.
- ***Go Beyond these Guides and Find Other Ways to Learn***
Continually seek ways to enhance staff and volunteer sensitivity to domestic violence issues and the role that healthy marriage and relationship programs can play in creating safe and healthy families and communities. People vary in how they best learn. Work with domestic violence experts in your community to identify videos or speakers to help increase your understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and your role in community intervention and prevention efforts. Offer to co-sponsor a community forum on domestic violence and healthy relationships, and find ways to support local and state domestic violence intervention and prevention initiatives. Find other creative and interactive ways to reinforce the information that these Guides introduce.

Our request for feedback is sincere. We welcome your comments and questions, which you can forward to us, along with requests for additional information and resources, at National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (info@healthymarriageinfo.org or 866-916-4672).

Sincerely,

The National Healthy Marriage Resource Center

NOTE to RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD PROGRAMS: While much of the information in the Guides will be helpful, the context and program focus of fatherhood programs raise additional domestic violence issues that require a specialized response. Fatherhood programs are encouraged to seek additional guidance on these issues from the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (www.fatherhood.gov).