Evaluation of Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives: Implementation Experiences in Impact Study Communities

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A Community-Based Study

To better understand the impact of community-focused service delivery models, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) contracted with RTI and the Urban Institute to conduct the evaluation of the Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives (CHMI).

The Community Healthy Marriage Initiatives are distinctive in two ways. First, the set of services, while limited to allowable services specified in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, is largely determined at the local level by sponsors, based on their approved grant applications. Second, the community level design assumes an importance for reaching multiple segments of the community — youth, singles, dating couples, engaged or married couples — and involving multiple types of agencies and organizations. One of the aims of these community-level demonstrations is to improve the environment by offering services to a large segment of the local community, by attracting local houses of worship and other groups to collaborate, and by using public affairs and media to reach a broad audience.

To evaluate these demonstrations, RTI and the Urban Institute collaborated with ACF to design an analysis that would compare sites with sufficient resources to run large-scale programs (impact/treatment sites) to sites with modest to minimal resources for such programming (comparison sites). The treatment and comparison site pairs selected for the evaluation are Dallas (treatment site with two grantees) and Fort Worth (comparison site), Milwaukee (treatment site with one grantee) and Cleveland (comparison), and St. Louis (treatment site with two grantees) and Kansas City (comparison).

In undertaking the impact evaluation, RTI and the Urban Institute collected two waves of survey data from large samples in neighborhoods in three treatment sites and three matched comparison sites.

Implementation Analysis

In addition to the two rounds of data collection, the RTI/Urban team is also conducting an implementation analysis that includes descriptive information about the range of relevant services provided in the treatment sites as well as in the comparison sites. The five grantees in the treatment sites are concentrating their service delivery within smaller communities (not city wide) in an effort to mobilize multiple organizations and key leaders around the important role that healthy relationships and marriage play for adults, children and communities as well as to ensure that services are easily accessible in the target areas.

The implementation analysis consists of the following components:

- Regular monitoring phone calls with key program staff
- Reviewing grantee reports
- Three site visits over the course of the grant, which included interviews with key staff, partners and local evaluation team members using an interview guide
- Mapping of grantee provider sites to document any changes in their geographic density over time

The five grantees are currently in their fifth year of providing marriage and relationship education services in their respective communities. Much can be learned about community-based family strengthening efforts from their diverse approaches to implementation.

CHMI Grant Basics

- 5 years
- Concentrated zip code areas within each community
- Participants must receive a minimum of 8 hours of relationship education
- Target populations:
  - Youth
  - Expectant and new parents
  - Singles
  - Married couples
- Allowable activities:
  - Public advertising campaigns
  - Education in high schools
  - Pre-marital education
  - Marriage enhancement and marriage skills
  - Marriage mentoring
  - Divorce reduction

Number of Participants Served by Grantee between September 2006 and September 2010

	ST. LOUIS		MILWAUKEE	DALLAS	
Type of Activity	Better Family Life	St. Louis Healthy Marriage Coalition	Center for Self-Sufficiency	Alliance for North Texas Healthy Effective Marriages	Friendship West Baptist Church
Education in high schools	3,330	4,206	2,145	3,891	7,248
Marriage education for unmarried expectant parents	1,445	46 couples 194 individuals	220	1,496	176
Premarital education	1,582	214 couples 730 individuals	5,008	6,418	253 engaged 910 singles
Marriage enhancement	1,467 couples 2,934 individuals	1,012 couples 674 individuals	353 couples	1,179 couples	1,133 couples
Divorce reduction	298 couples	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage mentoring	386 couples	N/A	407 couples	N/A	N/A
Total	13,593	7,388	8,133	14,163	10,853
Total Funding	$11M		$5M	$7.5M	

Grantee Information

Snapshots of the 5 Treatment Community Grantees

ST. LOUIS: Better Family Life (BFL)	BFL has been providing services to the St. Louis low-income and TANF populations for over 25 years. With the CHMI funding, they added healthy relationship education as a way to enhance their existing host of services, which mostly focus on job readiness. Better Family Life has consistently emphasized direct service provision, with an overall objective of stabilizing individuals and families in the St. Louis community. BFL has maintained a small coalition of key partners who are connected to the target populations of the initiative.
ST. LOUIS: St. Louis Healthy Marriage Coalition (SLHMC)	SLHMC took a community-based approach to the initiative to establish a network of partners to deliver services. SLHMC has prioritized their community awareness campaign and generating name recognition since they were a relatively new coalition. Originally a 14 partner coalition, several have dropped off the grant since year 1 and some new ones have joined. SLHMC's network of partners provide direct services to their target populations and must meet objectives to continue serving under the grant.
MILWAUKEE: Center for Self-Sufficiency (CFSS)	CFSS is a community-based nonprofit organization that provides services to youth, families and communities. CFSS maintains a small coalition of partners, thereby taking a more centralized approach to service delivery and bearing more responsibility. They employ strict service delivery objectives to ensure they are meeting project objectives. CFSS serves large proportions of youth in schools as well as incarcerated individuals.
DALLAS: Alliance for North Texas Healthy Effective Marriages (ANTHEM)	ANTHEM emphasizes community outreach in their approach to mobilize the community. They have a widespread social marketing campaign. ANTHEM builds relationships by identifying and recruiting partner sites to provide education for their program. They have strong ties with various organizations in the community including federal, state, or county jails; schools; recreation centers; faith-based organizations; and the juvenile drug court.
DALLAS: Friendship West Baptist Church (FWBC)	FWBC is a very large church with 11,000 members. Much of the programming and events are held at the church. FWBC also partners in the community to deliver services and have worked to strengthen their collaborations with other organizations.

Treatment Sites and Matched Comparison Sites in Context

Population Base of Sites	Treatment St. Louis	Comparison Kansas City	Treatment Milwaukee	Comparison Cleveland	Treatment Dallas	Comparison Ft. Worth
Total Population (2007)	175,017	138,467	135,556	117,389	178,380	117,389
Total Households	74,093	53,669	50,584	49,022	51,421	30,854
Total Family Households	38,887	31,711	32,619	28,250	37,506	22,900
Total Participants Served	20,981	N/A	8,133	N/A	25,016	N/A
Number of Targeted ZIP Codes	10	10	5	4	7	4

Source: Tabulations from Census data and grantee semi-annual reports

Considerations for Community-Focused Implementation

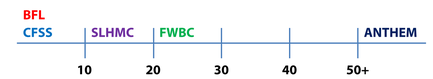
To reach out and serve their communities, the programs used distinct strategies and weighed several trade-offs in program design. Specifically, when approaching community-based services and outreach, grantees considered:

1. **The balance between direct and indirect services:** Did grantees allocate more resources to direct services (relationship education) or to indirect services (community marketing campaign)?
2. **Community coalition-building and partnerships:** Did grantees build a wide net of active partners or take a more centralized approach?
   - i. Roles and responsibilities of coalition partners varied
   - ii. This affected access to services

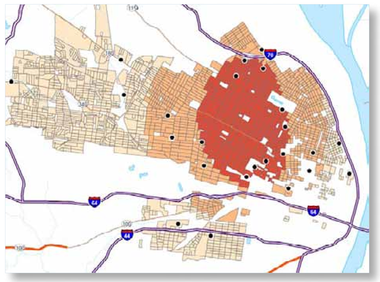
Building a Community Coalition

Some grantees developed large community coalitions to deliver services, while others focused on a small number of trusted partners

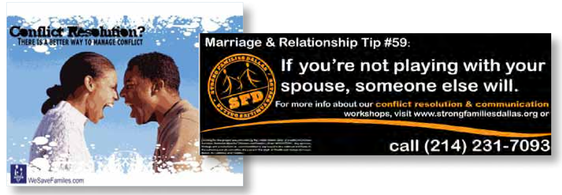
Number of Partners



Map of CHMI provider locations in targeted Zip code area in St. Louis, MO



Sample Marketing Materials



Contact Information

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RTI International is a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

Data From Participant Sample

In addition to the community sample in the treatment sites, RTI collected data from a sample of participants (as identified by each grantee).

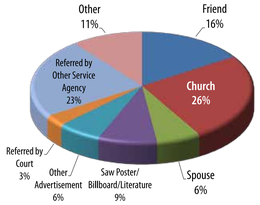
Number of Participant Cases Per Site	
St. Louis	276
Milwaukee	240
Dallas	229

Demographic Characteristic	Percent
Female	66%
Male	34%
Between 18 and 29 years old	34%
Over 30 years old	66%

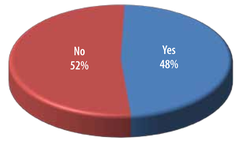
Demographic Characteristic	Percent
Race/Ethnicity	
- Black	60%
- White	9%
- Hispanic	8%
- Other	23%
Marital Status	
- Married	42%
- Cohabiting	13%
- Partnered (but not cohabiting)	12%
- Dating	5%
- Single	28%

Participant Awareness of Classes and Advertising

How did you first hear about these classes?

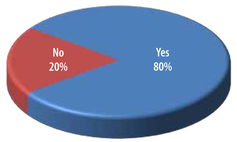


Are you aware of any advertising promoting healthy marriage, healthy relationships, or responsible parenting in your community?

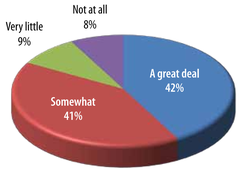


Participant Reflections on Relationship Education

Did the classes or workshops help you to improve your relationship with your child(ren)?

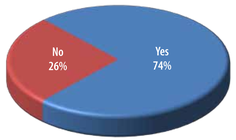
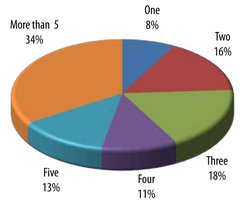


How much did your relationship with your spouse or partner improve as a result of the classes or workshops?



Classes and Community Spillover

Did the classes or workshops help you improve your relationships with other people in your life, such as your friends, employer, teachers, or others in the community?



About how many people did you talk with about what you learned?