

WITHIN
My Reach[®]

Version 2.0 Background and Overview

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Gaps in Relationship Education

- Services for:
 - Individuals not in relationships
 - Individuals in a relationship they don't believe is viable
 - Populations with low income levels

Target Population

- TANF program participants
 - Mostly women; small percentage of men
 - Children in the home
 - High financial stress, chaos
 - Seeking financial assistance, job training, job placement
 - Threats to personal safety (neighborhoods and partners)
 - Some have partners in the home

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Benefits of Targeting TANF Participants

- Access
 - Applicable to high risk and low income populations
 - Education on domestic violence
 - Education on the transitions and decisions that come *before* a commitment to marry
 - Education on children's well-being
 - Communication skills apply to many types of relationships
 - "Light Bulb" moments for many

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Overarching Goals of WMR

- Help those in viable relationships to cultivate, protect, and stabilize their unions, and to marry if desired.
- Help those in damaging relationships to leave safely, at some point.
- Help those desiring a romantic relationship and/or marriage in the future to choose future partners wisely.

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Core Philosophy

"Our love lives aren't neutral."

The decisions you make in romantic relationships will affect every other aspect of life—especially your child's well-being, your mental and physical health, and your work success.

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Benefits to the Agency

- A reduction in client/caseworker complaints in some offices
- Clients understand how to communicate better in professional situations (i.e., job training, interviews, workplace)
- Clients understand how choices impact their ability to reach personal, professional and family goals
- Offers alternative methods of making decisions that will influence the entire family
- Helps our clients understand the affect their relationships have on their children

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Implementation Challenges

- Staff Turnover and Facilitation Skills (ongoing training needs)
- Orientation Distractions (clients pulled out for assessments and other caseworker meetings)
- Serving clients in rural areas where weekly orientations are not possible due to smaller caseloads
- Budget cuts = fewer staff to facilitate curriculum and consolidation of orientation activities

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Ongoing Adjustments Needed

- Made changes along the way to adapt to new information and changing program needs
- Management at both PSI and OKDHS monitoring service delivery and addressing challenges
- Currently looking at a model in OKC for one office to serve as central service delivery location, with other offices referring all clients there
- Working with offices to integrate Child Welfare families to the service delivery process

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Qualitative Program Research

Purpose (Sparks, 2008):

- 1) in-depth description of the program
 - 2) assess fit between the curriculum and the TANF clients' actual relationship situations and concerns
 - 3) assess degree to which participants utilize skills taught in the program
- Observed *Within My Reach* classes, interviewed 22 attendees
 - Follow-up interviews with 11 attendees

Sparks, A. (2008). Implementation of "Within My Reach": Providing a relationship awareness and communication skills program to TANF recipients in Oklahoma. *National Poverty Center Working Paper Series, #08-11*. Retrieved September 4, 2008, from http://npc.umich.edu/publications/working_paper08-11.pdf

Qualitative Findings

- Good fit
 - Content fit with participants' past experiences and future goals
- 9 of 11 identified WMR themes as useful
 - Sliding vs. deciding
 - Family background
 - Speaker Listener Technique
 - Hope
- All could recall elements of the curriculum months later (when interviews conducted)

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Findings (cont'd)

- Additional Results:
 - High levels of satisfaction with the training
 - Significant increases in knowledge, as well as, communication and conflict resolution skills
 - Improvements in relationship quality
 - A statistical trend in the reduction of relationship aggression

Artic, B. F., Sar, B. K., Christensen, D. N., Eilers, F. S., El A. Karam, Barbee, A. P., et al. (in press). The impact of the Within My Reach relationship training on relationship skills and outcomes for low-income individuals. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*.



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