April 2018 Webinar
Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education
Programs for Youth: An In-Depth Study of Federally Funded Programs
with
Mindy Scott, PhD
Program Area Director and Senior Research Scientist with Child Trends
Webinar Information

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PRESENTER:

Mindy Scott, PhD
Program Area Director and Senior Research Scientist with Child Trends
Webinar Objectives

• Provide new knowledge about youth served by federally funded Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) programs and the implementation strategies used by programs

• Provide research-based findings on best practices for serving youth in HMRE programs
Background
Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) for Youth

- Romantic relationships during adolescence influence a variety of positive and negative experiences during adolescence and beyond.

- HMRE programs for youth can shape these experiences by improving young people’s attitudes, knowledge, and expectations concerning romantic relationships and marriage and by helping them develop key skills to form healthy (and avoid unhealthy) relationships.
Federally Funded HMRE Programs

• The Claims Resolution Act of 2010 (CRA) provided $75 million for Healthy Marriage grants and $75 million for Responsible Fatherhood grants

• Through discretionary grants to communities, ACF has funded 3 cohorts of grantees
  • Cohort 1 (2006 – 2011)
  • Cohort 2 (2011 – 2015)
  • Cohort 3 (2015 – 2020)
Federally Funded HMRE Programs

The HMRE program has eight activities designed to promote family-strengthening through the specified activities authorized by the CRA.

The CRA authorizes eight “healthy marriage promotion” activities:

- Public Advertising Campaigns
- Education in High Schools
- Marriage and Relationship Education/Skills (MRES)
- Pre-Marital Education
- Marriage Enhancement
- Divorce Reduction
- Marriage Mentoring
- Reduction of Disincentive to Marriage
HMRE Outcomes

Short-Term Outcomes

• Improved healthy marriage and (especially for youth) relationship skills
• Improved parenting and co-parenting skills
• Progress toward greater economic stability for low-income participants, including increased skill in attainment and employment

Long-Term Outcomes

• Improved family functioning and stability, including healthy marriage
• Improved adult and child well-being
• Increased economic stability and mobility
• Reduced poverty
• Successful youth transition to adulthood (where applicable)
• Reduced recidivism (where applicable)
HMRE for High School Youth

Serving Youth in High Schools

- Value of marriage
- Relationship skills
- Budgeting

Youth in high schools is the largest population served in HMRE
Youth Education and Relationship Services (YEARS) Project Overview

• Approximately half of the 60 HMRE programs funded in 2011 by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) served youth ages 14 to 24
  • This translates to more than 40,000 youth reached between 2011-2015

• Despite the large proportion of youth served, relatively little information about these programs had been systematically documented
YEARS Objectives

1. Describe the organizations implementing federally funded HMRE programs and the youth served by these programs by collecting and analyzing multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data

2. Assess whether HMRE programming for youth aligns with best practices for serving youth

3. Identify promising approaches used by grantees to better serve youth in HMRE programs
Child Trends’ Approach

• Reviewed existing work to identify best practices
  • Logic model for youth-serving HMRE programs developed as part of Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Models and Measures (3M) project
  • Reports on HMRE programs for youth
  • Research and evaluation literature related to adolescent relationships
  • Literature related to positive youth development approaches

• Identified a set of research-informed criteria against which HMRE programs for youth were compared
## Select YEARS Assessment Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples of Best Practices Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>• Curriculum content has clear goals&lt;br&gt;• Curriculum content is logically sequenced&lt;br&gt;• Program includes content relevant for the target population</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Content</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cultural competency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff attributes and skills</strong></td>
<td>• Facilitators interact with youth in a respectful manner&lt;br&gt;• Facilitators create a welcoming environment for all participants&lt;br&gt;• Facilitators are trained in curriculum content</td>
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<td>• Personal characteristics</td>
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<td>• Facilitation skills</td>
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<td>• HMRE-specific skills</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational practices</strong></td>
<td>• Grantee supervises staff adequately&lt;br&gt;• Grantee includes youth in decision-making&lt;br&gt;• Organization uses data to improve programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Organizational capacity and evaluation</td>
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YEARS Data Sources

• Pre-existing HMRE Grantee Data
  • Online Data Collection (OLDC) reports from 10/1/2013-9/30/2014
  • 2011 HMRE grantee applications
  • 2011 HMRE performance progress reports
  • 2011 HMRE grantee profiles

• New Data Collection
  • Web-based survey for 2011 HMRE grantee staff (26 directors and 8 facilitators from 28 grantees)
  • 2011/2015 HMRE program observations
  • 2011/2015 Grantee staff interviews
YEARS Findings

Objective 1: Describe the organizations implementing federally funded HMRE programs and the youth served
Objective 1 Key Findings – Program Setting

- HMRE grantees serve youth in diverse settings, and most programming was implemented in more than one setting.

**HMRE Grantees, by Setting**

- **In School, During School**: 80%
- **In School, After School**: 36%
- **At a Community-Based Organization**: 64%
- **At a Clinic**: 4%
- **Other**: 40%
## Objective 1 Key Findings – Program Setting

### Advantages and Challenges of Implementing Programming in School- and Non-school-based Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School-based</strong></td>
<td>- Curricula may help meet core education standards</td>
<td>- School and district rules can hinder program implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Direct connection to youth and parents</td>
<td>- Integrating programming into classes can be a challenge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Resources and support from guidance counselors</td>
<td>- Difficulty reaching parenting youth and other vulnerable populations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and other trusted adults</td>
<td>- Inconsistent access to youth across grades</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Classroom overcrowding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-school-based</strong></td>
<td>- More flexibility for scheduling program sessions</td>
<td>- Community program space</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Ability to provide incentives</td>
<td>sometimes unwelcoming to youth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Better chance of reaching at-risk youth populations</td>
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</table>
Objective 1 Key Findings – HMRE Topics

- Most grantees addressed healthy relationship attitudes, behaviors, and skills onsite

### Percent of Grantees Reporting That They Addressed Select HMRE Practices Onsite

- **HMRE Attitudes and Beliefs:** 96%
- **HMRE Skills and Behaviors:** 96%
- **Marriage and Cohabitation:** 93%
- **Parenting/Coparenting Skills:** 79%
Objective 1 Key Findings – HMRE Topics

• Fewer grantees addressed additional topics onsite

Percent of Grantees Reporting That They Addressed Other Practices Onsite

- Financial Management: 79%
- Education Goals: 71%
- Career Goals: 68%
- Extended Family Relationships: 68%
- Housing: 25%
Objective 1 Key Findings – HMRE Curricula

- Most 2011 grantees serving youth indicated that they selected evidence-based curricula, and about half reported that they had selected age-appropriate curricula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commonly Used Curricula</th>
<th>Number of grantees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREP Within Our/My Reach</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Avoid Falling For a Jerk/PICK</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love U2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connections</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love Notes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIRS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Smarts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREPARE/ENRICH</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Relationships for Young Adults (ARYA)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Training</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready for Love</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastering the Mysteries of Love</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Wellness, The Strongest Link</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Grantee profiles (n=34)
Note: Only curricula that were offered by at least 3 grantees are shown in this table
Objective 1 Key Findings – Youth Characteristics

- Older youth (18-24 year-olds) are more likely to be served with younger youth or mixed with adults.
Objective 1 Key Findings – Youth Characteristics

Gender of HMRE Program Participants

- Male: 47%
- Female: 53%
Objective 1 Key Findings - Target Populations

• HMRE grantees target and serve diverse and often disadvantaged populations of youth, including:

  • Youth from single-parent homes
  • Youth whose parents struggle with addiction
  • Youth with incarcerated parents
  • Youth who have been sexually assaulted
  • Impoverished youth
  • Homeless youth
  • Couples
  • Immigrant/minority populations
  • Pregnant or parenting youth
Objective 1 Key Findings – Youth Characteristics

Percent of Grantees Serving a Majority of Youth in Each Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent of Grantees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living in poverty</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of abuse</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 1 Key Findings - Training

- Staff were well-trained in most areas of implementation and demonstrated positive HMRE-related facilitation skills

Reports of Hours of Program-Specific Training
Objective 1 Key Findings - Training

Facilitator Training in Topics Related to Facilitation and Delivery

- **Most or All Facilitators Received Training**
  - Program Content: 100%
  - Program Delivery: 96%
  - Logic or Theory of Program: 84%
  - Group Facilitation: 84%
  - Establishing Professional Boundaries: 84%
Objective 1 Key Findings - Training

Facilitators Needing More Training, by Topic

- Group Facilitation: 63%
- Logic or Theory of Program: 63%
- Program Delivery: 58%
- Program Content: 50%
- Establishing Professional Boundaries: 42%
YEARS Findings

Objective 2: Assess whether HMRE programming for youth aligns with best practices for serving youth
Objective 2 Key Findings

• The vast majority of grantees (over 80 percent for all criteria) agreed that their organizations were implementing best practices for serving youth with consistent reports across directors and facilitators.
Objective 2 Key Findings – Implementation

Percent of Grantees Reporting They Agree/Strongly Agree That Their Programming Has Each Implementation Practice

- Has Clear Goals: 96%, 96%, 96%, 92%, 88%
- Logical Sequence: 96%, 96%, 96%, 92%, 88%
- Sharing and Listening Activities: 92%, 88%
- Relevant Content: 88%
- Relevant Materials: 92%, 88%
Objective 2 Key Findings – Implementation

Percent of Grantees Reporting They Agree/Strongly Agree That Their Programming Has Each Implementation Practice

- **Targets Specific Needs**: 88%
- **Positive Youth Interaction**: 84%
- **Values Diverse Relationships**: 84%
- **Values Diverse Families**: 84%

Director Report (n=25)
Objective 2 Key Findings – Implementation

Percent of Grantees that Agree/Strongly Agree That They Use Inclusive Practices

- 92% Used Activities and Materials Representative of the Population Served
- 88% Had Content That was Appropriate for a Broad Range of Youth
- 76% Was Inclusive of LBGTQ Youth
- 52% Engaged Youths' Parents
- 36% Included Youth in Decision-Making
Objective 2 Key Findings - Inclusivity

- During the interviews, grantee staff described additional approaches to improve cultural appropriateness and align their programs with their populations, such as:

- hiring staff with similar racial/ethnic backgrounds as the youth served,
- hiring Spanish-speaking staff when working with Latinos, using inclusive language,
- focusing on family and peer relationships in addition to romantic relationships,
- using research-based approaches for serving youth/select populations,
- using curricula developed specifically for their youth population(s), and
- incorporating relevant content like discussing co-parenting relationships when working with pregnant and parenting teens.
Objective 2 Key Findings – Youth Leadership Opportunities

• Although not as common, some grantees were already providing youth with leadership opportunities:

“Youth play a large role in program-related decisions—they play all the role if you think about it. Depending on how they respond to the lessons, we won’t know what they’re thinking, what’s needed, what to do differently, so based on their feedback and how they respond to us is how we approach the situation.”

“I’ve learned a lot of terms... They’ve taught me so much and it helps out because then in my next group I’m able to speak on their level and be able to get the message across.”

“I think youth play a large role. It’s about ownership. I let them play as much of a role as they can in a prescribed set of lessons. They have choices about how to approach the material. I try to show them the end project and let them decide how they want to go about it.”
Objective 2 Key Findings – Organizational Capacity for Program Improvement

Percent of Grantees Reporting Monitoring Program Fidelity Most or All of the Time

- 72% Have Ongoing Review of Documents
- 60% Use Fidelity Data to Support CQI
- 48% Observe to Monitor Fidelity
Objective 2 Key Findings – Organizational Capacity for Program Improvement

Percent of Grantees Reporting Monitoring Program Quality Most or All of the Time

- Use Corrective Feedback: 71%
- Complete a Form: 64%
- Observe to Monitor Quality: 48%

Director Report (n=24)
YEARS
Conclusions and Recommendations
Recommendations for supporting the design and implementation of HMRE programs

• Form community partnerships that allow programs to implement in multiple settings
  • Each setting has unique advantages, and partnering together can help address challenges that programs face in each setting

• Support program efforts to reach and serve older youth (ages 18 to 24)
Recommendations for supporting the design and implementation of HMRE programs

- Provide additional information and training related to the unique needs of youth, select curricula that are age- and developmentally-appropriate, and follow best practices for serving youth
Recommendations for supporting the design and implementation of HMRE programs

• Provide additional training in specific program implementation areas, including:
  • Integrating positive youth development approaches, including:
    • providing skill-building opportunities
    • providing youth with leadership opportunities
    • including youth in decision-making
  • Conducting observations on an ongoing basis to monitor program/curriculum fidelity and quality to inform program improvement efforts
Additional Resources and Information

OPRE project webpage:

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/youth-education-and-relationship-services-years
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Webinar
May 9, 2018

Sexting, Cyberbullying and Adolescent Relationships

With

Jeffrey Temple, PhD

Licensed Psychologist and
Director of Behavioral Health and
Research, OB/GYN, University of Texas Medical Branch
Thank you!

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HMRE Programs for Youth