



Project Overview Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services (STREAMS), 2015-2020

A long standing body of research evidence indicates that children fare best when raised in stable, low-conflict, two-parent families. However, 4 in 10 children currently born in the United States have unmarried parents. Although many unmarried parents live together when their children are born, their relationships can be tenuous and most end within a few years of the child's birth. In addition, divorce rates remain high, particularly among lower-income populations. Because of these patterns, half of U.S. children will spend time in a single-parent family before they turn 18.

To encourage the formation of healthy relationships—and ultimately stable, two-parent families—since 2005, Congress has authorized federal funding for healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs. The funding, administered through the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), supports grants for programs offering a mix of services, ranging from relationship education for high school students to marriage and relationship skills programs for adult couples. Some programs also address family economic stability by integrating job and career advancement activities with HMRE services.

To help identify strategies for improving the delivery and effectiveness of HMRE programs, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within ACF is launching the Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services (STREAMS) project, a large multi-site random assignment impact evaluation of HMRE programs. OPRE has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and its partner, Public Strategies, to design and conduct the study.

STREAMS will examine a mix of programs serving adults and youth. The first part of the study will involve gathering input from practitioners, program developers, and research experts about priority research questions and how the study can best contribute to the field. The study will emphasize program improvement and answering questions of particular policy relevance. Research questions of potential interest include what program elements or implementation strategies are key to achieving outcomes and how program engagement can be improved.

After refining the study research questions, the team will work to identify and recruit up to six evaluation sites. In each site, the study team will conduct both an in-depth process study and rigorous random assignment impact evaluation. Program enrollment and data collection is slated to begin in 2016. Results will be released on a rolling basis as the study progresses.

To learn more about the study, please contact:

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