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# **Same-sex relationships: Updates to Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education programming (SUHMRE)**

**OMB Information Collection Request  
New Collection**

## **Supporting Statement**

### **Part A**

**January 2016**

Submitted By:  
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Administration for Children and Families  
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### INSTRUMENTS

- Instrument #1: Focus Group Guide for Adult Program Applicants
- Instrument #2: Focus Group Guide for Adult Program Attendees
- Instrument #3: Focus Group Guide for Youth Program Attendees
- Instrument #4: Interview Guide for Experts
- Instrument #5: Interview Guide for Program Managers
- Instrument #6: Interview Guide for Facilitators

### ATTACHMENTS

#### **Attachment A: Program Recruitment and Consent Forms**

- Attachment A-1: Program Recruitment Letter
- Attachment A-2: Staff Consent Form
- Attachment A-3: Expert Consent Form
- Attachment A-4: Adult Consent Form
- Attachment A-5: Youth Assent Form
- Attachment A-6: Parental Consent Form for the Participation of Minors
- Attachment A-7: Receipt of Payment for Adults and Youth
- Attachment A-8: Guide to Inviting Focus Group Participants

#### **Attachment B: Federal Register 60-Day Notice**

#### **Attachment C: Urban Institute Staff Confidentiality Pledge**

**Attachment D: Certificate of Review from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Urban Institute**

## **A1. Necessity for the Data Collection**

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) seeks approval to collect information from participants and staff at Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) grantee programs. This information will inform a research study entitled “Same-sex relationships: Updates to HMRE programs” or SUHMRE (pronounced “summary”). This study aims to improve understanding of the current state of HMRE practices for same-sex couples and lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (youth and adults) who may become involved in same-sex relationships, and to identify and promote promising approaches for serving them. The data collection will include interviews, conducted in-person or by telephone, and focus groups with experts, practitioners, and HMRE program applicants/attendees. Data will be collected through small group and one-on-one interviews with program directors and staff and participating couples and individuals, including youth. This research study will eventually vet these approaches with stakeholders in the field.

### ***Study Background***

Government interest in HMRE programs has grown in response to dramatic changes in the structure of American families. High divorce rates and rates of non-marital childbearing have led to increasing levels of family and household instability in the U.S. There is concern and consensus that these changes have negative consequences for children (Cherlin, Furstenberg, Chase-Lansdale, Kiernan, Robins, Morrison, and Teitler 1991), women (Smock, Manning, and Gupta 1999) and men (Amato 2000). HMRE programming provides individuals and couples with educational services intended to increase their skills in active communication, conflict resolution and other aspects of healthy, stable relationships and marriages. The goal of this programming is to assist couples (or individuals who may eventually be in romantic relationships) to **engage in, or** be better prepared for, **healthy relationships** One of the allowable activities of HMRE programming is services for high school youth (other youth may also be served). These services help teach the characteristics of healthy relationships and good decision-making, while also encouraging the development of useful relationship skills.

The legal constraints imposed by the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) previously prevented an explicit focus on marriage for same-sex couples within ACF-funded HMRE programs; nevertheless, from discussions with providers it is clear that some same-sex couples and LGB individuals have participated in HMRE programs. With the 2013 Supreme Court decision striking down key portions of DOMA and the 2015 Supreme Court ruling that the Constitution guarantees the right to marriage for both same-sex and opposite-sex couples, many educators and program administrators within the HMRE field are now interested in curricula products to help them better serve LGB youth and adults.

There are close to 1 million cohabitating same-sex couples (Gates 2015) in the US. Nearly one in five same-sex couples are raising more than 200,000 children (Gates 2015). While substantial changes have occurred in the legal and social climate in the United States for same-sex couples, LGB individuals, and their families, many same-sex couples and LGB individuals experience economic and social disadvantage, especially in parts of the country where social acceptance is lowest (Badgett 2003). Same-sex couples and LGB individuals still confront social stigma that affects their relationships (Lewis, Dertega, Griffin, and Krowinski 2003). This creates a need for

HMRE resources. Previous ACF efforts have focused on revising HMRE curricula and/or promoting appropriate approaches in HMRE programming to address the needs of low-income families, Latinos, and other populations. Similarly, in 2015, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct an exploratory study to learn about how HMRE programs approach serving same-sex couples and LGB individuals. Little evidence exists on the relationship needs of same-sex couples and LGB individuals and the ways that HMRE programs meet these needs; therefore, this study will begin to explore these issues and offer lessons learned on the delivery of services to LGB individuals and same-sex couples.

### ***Legal or Administrative Requirements that Necessitate the Collection***

There are no legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. The ACF OPRE is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency.

## **A2. Purpose of Survey and Data Collection Procedures**

### ***Overview of Purpose and Approach***

This study will be exploratory in nature. The goal of this information collection is to improve the HMRE fields' understanding of how current HMRE programs address the needs of same-sex couples and LGB individuals, via understanding perspectives of program staff on serving LGB individuals and same-sex couples, participants' perspectives on HMRE programming, and expert perspectives on HMRE curricula and programming.

The study approach will include one-on-one interviews, conducted in-person or by telephone, and focus groups with HMRE experts, HMRE staff, and applicants to and participants in HMRE programming. Respondents will include program facilitators, program managers, adult applicants/participants, youth participants, and HMRE experts. Upon OMB approval, the interviews and focus groups will be conducted by summer 2016. By fall 2016, a final report will be completed drawing upon and synthesizing these data to present key research findings.

### ***Research Questions***

As mentioned earlier, this study will be exploratory in nature. The study will explore the following research questions:

- I. How do existing HMRE curricula and programming address same-sex couples and LGB individuals who may eventually be involved in same-sex relationships? Do participants think their distinct needs are met with existing curricula/programming? What are those distinct needs?
- II. What recruitment and service delivery approaches and practices have been used in serving these populations? What recruitment and service delivery approaches might be promising?
- III. How can curricula and programming be adapted to specifically address same-sex couples and LGB youth/adults in such a manner that their needs are addressed? How will adaptations

differ depending on whether same-sex couples and LGB participants are served separately or together with opposite-sex couples and non-LGB participants?

- IV. According to practitioners' and experts' understanding of the field and any other available data, what proportion of the current service population is LGB?
- V. How do participants and practitioners view the benefits and drawbacks of integrating services for same-sex couples with services for opposite-sex couples, versus serving each separately? How do these views vary for services aimed at couples vs. individuals, and adults vs. youth?

### ***Study Design***

The study design is based on methods suitable for exploratory research, in which the primary purpose is to gather information about the lay of the land, rather than to test hypotheses or evaluate outcomes. Interviews, conducted in-person or by telephone, and focus groups will capture multiple perspectives on the ways HMRE programs engage on LGB issues. We plan six types of focus groups or interviews:

- Up to 3 120-minute focus group with adult applicants to HMRE programs (maximum of 6 people per focus group);
- Up to 6 120-minute focus group with adult attendees of HMRE programs (maximum of 6 people per focus group);
- Up to 6 120-minute focus group with youth attendees of HMRE programs (maximum of 6 people per focus group);
- Up to 12 60 minute interviews with HMRE program facilitators;
- Up to 10 60 minute interviews with HMRE program managers;
- Up to 10 60 minute interviews with HMRE experts.

Interviewing program leaders and experts individually will allow us to capture sufficient detail on both the field of HMRE programming and on particular program's history, philosophy, structure, and components to better understand how decisions were made to serve or not serve same-sex couples and LGB individuals. Facilitators also can discuss their experiences working with same-sex couples and LGB individuals and methods of service delivery.

Conducting focus groups with program participants (and applicants), instead of one-on-one interviews, will facilitate conversation among participants about their experiences in HMRE programs and allow multiple perspectives to be expressed. The focus group guides emphasize shared experiences rather than individual experiences, to further reduce discomfort.

A team of two experienced, qualitative researchers (one senior researcher lead and one research assistant) will conduct each interview and focus group. All HMRE program interviews and focus groups will be scheduled with the assistance of the program director and in such a way as to minimize burden to staff and participants. Interviews and focus groups will be held at locations and times convenient to respondents.

The senior researcher will lead the interviews and focus groups, and with the permission of the respondent(s), will audio record the interviews and focus groups. For one-on-one interviews, we will use a laptop to take (close to verbatim) notes and later create targeted transcripts capturing the key information provided. For focus groups, audio recordings will be fully transcribed. If permission to record is not provided, both researchers will take more detailed notes and, immediately after the interview or focus group, create an extensive summary of the interview or focus group and the key information provided.

All hard and electronic copies of documents containing sensitive information or personal identifiers will be stored in accordance with a data security plan, as approved by the Urban Institute's Institutional Review Board.

### ***Universe of Data Collection Efforts***

The research approach calls for the development of customized protocols for each type of respondent. The instruments to be used for collecting data are as follows:

- Focus Group Guide for Adult Program Applicants (Instrument #1): To collect information during the focus group with adult applicants to HMRE programs, including how applicants were recruited, their understanding of sexual orientation terms, and whether any materials on LGB relationships were shared with them in program settings.
- Focus Group Guide for Adult Program Attendees (Instrument #2): To collect information during the focus group with adult attendees of HMRE programs, including how attendees were recruited and enrolled, their program satisfaction and outcomes, and what material on LGB relationships were shared with them.
- Focus Group Guide for Youth Program Attendees (Instrument #3): To collect information during the focus group with youth participants of HMRE programs, including how they were recruited and enrolled, their program satisfaction and outcomes, their understanding of sexual orientation terms, and what material on LGB relationships were shared with them.
- Interview Guide for Experts (Instrument #4): To collect information during interviews with HMRE experts, including their understanding of sexual orientation terms and LGB issues, their understanding of target populations for HMRE programs, their understanding of HMRE non-discrimination policies, curricula, and program delivery, their understanding of potential issues to HMRE curricula revisions and program delivery, and their understanding of program facilitator training and perceived needs.
- Interview Guide for Program Managers (Instrument #5): To collect information during interviews with HMRE program managers, including their understanding of sexual orientation terms, information on their program's target population, its non-discrimination policy, curricula, program delivery, and their understanding of potential issues to HMRE curricula revisions and program delivery, and their program facilitator's training and perceived training needs.
- Interview Guide for Facilitators (Instrument #6): To collect information during interviews with HMRE program facilitators, including their understanding sexual orientation terms and LGB issues, their program's target population, non-discrimination policy, curricula, program delivery, their understanding of potential issues to HMRE curricula revision and program delivery, and their training and perceived training needs.

### **A3. Improved Information Technology to Reduce Burden**

Whenever possible, technology will be used in data collection efforts to reduce burden on study participants. Each interview session and focus group will involve two members of the project team; one person will ask questions and the second person will take (close to verbatim) notes on a laptop, capturing key quotes and responses. When respondents allow interviewers to audio record the sessions, the recordings will be used to later confirm direct quotes or other details from these sessions, and to produce full transcriptions of focus groups, rather than returning to participants to confirm statements.

### **A4. Efforts to Identify Duplication**

The data requirements for this study have been carefully reviewed to determine whether the needed information is already available. Efforts to identify duplication include a review of the current literature and discussions with program experts. No existing data source can provide the data needed to answer the study's research questions.

### **A5. Involvement of Small Organizations**

The potential exists for data collection activities to affect small entities associated with the grantees contacted for data collection. The organizations selected for participation may be small organizations, other non-profit organizations, government agencies, and for-profit organizations. Proposed data collection efforts are designed to minimize the burden on all organizations involved, including small businesses and entities, by collecting only critical information. Burden will be minimized for respondents by restricting the interview length to the minimum required, by conducting telephone or on-site interviews, at times convenient for the respondent, and by not requiring record-keeping or written responses.

### **A6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection**

This is a one-time data collection effort.

### **A7. Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances for the proposed data collection efforts.

### **A8. Federal Register Notice and Consultation**

#### ***Federal Register Notice and Comments***

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regulations at 5 CFR Part 1320 (60 FR 44978, August 29, 1995), OPRE published a notice in the Federal Register announcing the agency's intention to request an OMB review of this information collection activity. This notice was published on March 31, 2015, Volume 80, Number 61, page 17048-17049 and provided a 60-day period for



public comment. A copy of this notice is attached as Appendix B. During the notice and comment period, no comments were received.

### **A9. Incentives for Respondents**

Research has shown that incentives are effective at increasing response rates for populations similar to participants in this study.<sup>1</sup> Cash payments of \$40 for adults and \$25 for youth will be provided to study participants in appreciation of their participation in the study. The levels vary because of the ages of focus group participants; larger tokens of appreciation may be coercive to youth participants. The amounts indicated for respondents is similar to those offered in association with recent OMB-approved information collections conducted by the Urban Institute, including *Fatherhood and Home Visiting*, where adult participants were offered \$40, and *Understanding the Dynamics of Disconnection from Employment and Assistance*, where adult participants were again offered \$40.

The amounts have been successful in recruiting participants in these other, similar information collections, and are appropriate in size to thank respondents for their participation. Incentives are important tools to recruit and retain hard-to-reach populations, including populations that this project will serve including low-income adults and LGB adults. In addition, our surveys include potentially sensitive questions about the perception of LGB issues, and thus impose additional burden on respondents. Respondents who withdraw from the study during a focus group will still be offered the indicated token of appreciation.

### **A10. Privacy of Respondents**

Prior to the start of each interview and focus group, the researchers will assure the respondents that the information provided will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. Specifically, none of the information obtained during the course of the study will be disclosed in such a way that individuals or organizations can be identified by anyone outside the research team, and the respondents will not be quoted by name in dissemination activities, such as the final research report, research briefs, federal briefings, and conference presentations. Additional information will not be shared with anyone other than the research staff assigned to the study, all of whom will be required to sign the Urban Institute's *Staff Confidentiality Pledge* (see Attachment C).

All adult respondents will be given and asked to sign informed consent forms before the start of the interview or focus group. Youth respondents, defined as those under age 18, will be given an assent form and asked to sign it, while their parents will be given and asked to sign consent forms on their behalf. See Attachments A-2 through A-6 for copies of the consent forms for staff, adult participants, consent forms for parents, and assent forms for youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Berlin, Martha, Leyla Mohadjer, Joseph Waksberg, Andrew Kolstad, Irwin Kirsch, D. Rock, and Kentaro Yamamoto. 1992. An experiment in monetary incentives. In *JSM proceedings*, 393-98. Alexandria, VA: American Statistical Association.  
Singer, Eleanor, and Richard A. Kulka. 2002. Paying respondents for survey participation. In *Studies of welfare populations: Data collection and research issues*, eds. Michele Ver Ploeg, Robert A. Moffitt, and Constance F. Citro, 105-28. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

This study is also under the purview of the Urban Institute’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), which is registered under Federal wide Assurance number 00000189, indicating it adheres to the requirements in the HHS Protection of Human Subjects regulations at 45 CFR Part 46. All data collection and security procedures described in this package have been approved by the IRB: see Attachment D for a copy of the IRB Notice of Approval. To receive IRB approval for this study, the data collection effort must adhere to the following principles:

- Subjects are informed of the nature of the research and how it will be used, and their consent, either obtained or explicitly waived, where risks to them are determined to be minimal.
- Adequate provision is made to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain privacy of data, where promised and as appropriate.
- Risks to subjects are minimized to the extent possible within research designs.
- Risks to subjects (from the research) are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits (from the research).
- The selection of subjects is as equitable as possible (the burdens and benefits of the research are fairly distributed) and particular attention is paid to research involving vulnerable populations and protected health information.

#### **A11. Sensitive Questions**

The focus group and interview guides contain some questions that could be considered sensitive. Specifically, attendees are asked about whether LGB issues were discussed in HMRE classes and program managers and experts are asked about LGB issues. Although nothing is asked about any individual’s sexual orientation or sexual identity, nor about any sexual behavior, even mentioning sexual orientation and LGB issues could be sensitive to some respondents. All respondents will be informed that their participation is voluntary and they may choose not to answer specific questions.

These data are integral to understanding how HMRE programs approach the needs of same-sex couples and integrating LGB information into programming. They are thus at the core of the research. Collecting these data will contribute to filling gaps in knowledge about HMRE programs and same-sex needs.

#### **A12. Estimation of Information Collection Burden**

Exhibit A-1 shows estimated burden of the information collection, which will take place within a one year period. The estimates of annualized hour burden include interviews with program staff and clients.

- **Focus Group Guide for Adult Program Applicants (Instrument #1):** 3 focus groups with 6 adult applicants each (18 total) to HMRE programs, at an average length of 120 minutes.
- **Focus Group Guide for Adult Program Attendees (Instrument #2):** 6 focus groups with 6 adult attendees each (36 total) to HMRE programs, at an average length of 120 minutes.

- **Focus Group Guide for Youth Program Attendees (Instrument #3):** 6 focus groups with 6 youth attendees each (36 total) to HMRE programs, at an average length of 120 minutes.
- **Interview Guide for Experts (Instrument #4):** Interviews with 12 HMRE experts, at an average length of 60 minutes.
- **Interview Guide for Program Managers (Instrument #5):** Interviews with 10 HMRE program managers, at an average length of 60 minutes.
- **Interview Guide for Facilitators (Instrument #6):** Interviews with 10 HMRE program facilitators, at an average length of 60 minutes.
- **Interview Guide for Recruitment of Adult and Youth Participants (Included in the Appendix):** Interview guide for program staff to administer to up to 90 potential program applicants and attendees to recruit youth and adult participants at an average length of 15 minutes.

<b>Instrument (and appendix number).</b>	<b>Total Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Number of Responses Per Respondent</b>	<b>Average Burden Hours Per Respondent</b>	<b>Annual Burden Hours</b>	<b>Average Hourly Wage (\$)</b>	<b>Total Annual Cost (\$)</b>
Focus Group Guide for Adult Applicants (Instrument #1)	18	1	2	36	\$7.25	\$261
Focus Group Guide for Adult Attendees (Instrument #2)	36	1	2	72	\$7.25	\$522
Focus Group Guide for Youth (Instrument #3)	36	1	2	72	\$7.25	\$522
Interview Guide with Experts (Instrument #4)	12	1	1	12	\$39.46	\$473.52
Interview Guide with Program Managers (Instrument #5)	10	1	1	10	\$30.99	\$309.90
Interview Guide with Facilitators (Instrument #6)	10	1	1	10	\$18.02	\$180.20
Staff Recruitment Script	90	1	.25	23	\$18.02	\$414.16
<b>Estimated Annual Burden</b>				235		\$2,682.78

### **Total Annual Cost**

The estimated total annualized cost burden to respondents is based on the burden hours and estimated hourly wage rates for each data collection instrument, as shown in the two right-most columns of Exhibit A-1. These estimates are based on:

- An assumed hourly wage of \$39.46 for experts, based on mean hourly wage for “Miscellaneous Social Scientists and Related Workers,” as reported in the May 2012 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4\\_541700.htm#19-0000](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4_541700.htm#19-0000)

- An assumed hourly wage of \$30.99 for program managers, based on mean hourly wage for “Social and Community Service Managers,” as reported in the May 2012 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119151.htm>).
- An assumed hourly wage of \$18.02 for program facilitators, based on mean hourly wage for “Community Health Workers,” as reported in the May 2012 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes211094.htm>).
- An assumed hourly rate of \$7.25 for adult attendees, equal to the federal minimum wage. An assumed hourly wage rate of \$7.25 per hour for youth participants, equal to the federal minimum wage.

The estimated total annualized cost burden to respondents is \$2,682.78

### **A13. Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers**

There are no additional costs to respondents or record keepers.

### **A14. Estimate of Cost to the Federal Government**

The total cost to the federal government of implementing the information collection activity is \$289,641; as data will be collected over one year, the annual costs to the Federal government will be \$289,641 for this proposed data collection.

### **A15. Change in Burden**

This is a new data collection.

### **A16. Plan and Time Schedule for Information Collection, Tabulation and Publication**

Data collection will be completed within 7 months of OMB approval. Findings from analysis of the information collected through interviews and focus groups will be presented by the research contractor in a final research report, expected to be completed by fall 2016. The final report will include an executive summary and sections devoted to study background, research questions, methods, major findings, and conclusions. Appendices will include data collection instruments and any technical details on site selection and data collection. This report will be publically disseminated through OPRE and the Urban Institute, and will likely be submitted for publication in peer-reviewed professional journals. Findings will also be presented at research and practitioner conferences. Additionally, the findings will be used by OPRE to generate hypotheses for future HMRE research.

### **A17. Reasons Not to Display OMB Expiration Date**

All instruments will display the expiration date for OMB approval.

### **A18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions**

No exceptions are necessary for this information collection.

## References

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