

# **Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services (STREAMS)**

**OMB Information Collection Request  
0970-0356**

## **Supporting Statement**

### **Part A**

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

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) requests permission to contact organizations for the purpose of gathering preliminary information about the healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programming for the Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services (STREAMS) study. Permission to contact organizations for this purpose is requested under ACF's generic clearance for formative data collections. The study team will collect information relevant to understanding the field and discussing the field's interest in evaluation strategies and priorities for the STREAMS study.

### ***Study Background***

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Office of Planning Research and Evaluation (OPRE) has launched the Strengthening Relationship Education and Marriage Services (STREAMS) study. Using a mix of research methods, this five-and-a-half-year study plans to partner with HMRE programs that serve youth, single adults, and adult couples to identify strategies for improving the delivery and effectiveness of HMRE programs. The study will be designed to systematically test innovative, evidence-informed approaches to the core components of HMRE programs that reflect the latest developments in behavioral science, skill-building, and other relevant disciplines. The study also plans to test new strategies programs can use to improve recruitment and participant engagement. Since 2005 Congress has authorized dedicated funding for discretionary grants from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to promote HMRE programs. STREAMS comes at an important time for research on marriage and relationship education programming. Programs use a number of promising models to work with youth, single adults, and adult couples, but little evidence is available to indicate which are effective and worth replicating or scaling up. STREAMS is one of several new studies funded by ACF taking complementary approaches to provide needed evidence about program strategies to serve youth, single adults, and adult couples in HMRE programs.

The current information collection request is for gathering preliminary information about the HMRE field to inform the design of STREAMS.

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

There are no requirements that necessitate the collection. ACF is undertaking the collection at the discretion of the agency.

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

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

The purpose of the current information collection request is to seek approval to gather preliminary information about the HMRE field, and to explore with HMRE programs the research questions that are of interest to them and the design options that are feasible. After this information-gathering phase, STREAMS plans to submit a full information request package for future data collection for the study, including baseline data collection, implementation data collection, and follow-up data collection for measuring impacts.

The study expects to develop a structured demonstration project in six sites to test key program approaches and implementation strategies in HMRE programs serving youth, single adults, and couples. To date, rigorous studies of the effectiveness of HMRE programs serving low-income couples raising children together—such as ACF's Building Strong Families and Supporting Healthy Marriage evaluations

—have shown mixed results. ACF’s Parents and Children Together (PACT) project is currently examining the impacts of a next wave of HMRE programs for low-income couples. STREAMS will build on the evidence base from this earlier research and examine the effects of new approaches to HMRE services for this population. Little rigorous research has been conducted on HMRE programs serving single adults and youth. STREAMS will fill this research gap and provide important new evidence concerning the effectiveness of HMRE programs serving these groups.

For over 10 years, OPRE has led a sustained effort within the federal government to develop, document and test HMRE programs, particularly with low-income populations. STREAMS seeks to generate evidence about how to improve the effectiveness of HMRE programs through rigorous testing of the key program approaches and implementation strategies. HMRE programs funded by OFA are encouraged to provide comprehensive services, including services designed to improve marriage and relationship skills and economic stability. HMRE programs’ approaches to service provision vary widely. For example, programs serve a range of target populations including high school youth, single adults, and low-income couples with children. While programs for adults are usually led by a trained facilitator, the structure, format, and curriculum used vary significantly. Programs aimed at youth and young adults are conducted in multiple settings, including high schools and community settings, and as with adult programs, the structure, format, and curriculum vary substantially. This variability in HMRE programs that are operating today has implications for the research questions that STREAMS will test and for the STREAMS study design. For this reason the study team is requesting permission to contact programs to gather information about their current practices and ask for their input on potential research questions to test in STREAMS. The information collection will take place in 2015 to ensure that the study design can be finalized by the end of the year and baseline data collection can begin by July 2016. The remainder of this section describes the study team’s plans for contacting programs and how the information will be used.

### ***Research Questions***

This study will explore the following research questions:

1. What is the range of characteristics of HMRE programs currently operating in the field, including the programs’ administrative structures, services offered, community service contexts, and capacities?
2. Given the proposed research questions for STREAMS and potential design options, what feedback do HMRE programs have in terms of a) the importance of the questions to the field; b) their interest in the proposed interventions to test; and c) the feasibility of the potential design options?

### ***Study Design***

This collection serves as a preliminary step to gather information that will inform the design of the larger STREAMS study. The study team will consult program experts in OFA, have individualized conversations with practice and research experts in the field, and conduct internet searches to identify a sample of up to 30 HMRE programs to contact. We will include both programs aimed at youth and adults. We will also conduct a public webinar to share information about the proposed study and invite interested programs to contact the study team. No information will be collected as part of this webinar. The study team will select programs to contact based on the program size, experience operating HMRE programming, and whether the program expressed an interest in informing the STREAMS design or were recommended to do so by an expert. A limitation is that this process will not yield a representative sample of HMRE programs; however, it will identify many of the larger programs that have a history of working with adult couples and youth, and programs that use innovative approaches.

Upon OMB approval of the information collection instruments, the study team will send each program director a request for a one-hour telephone call via email (see Appendix A, STREAMS Phone Meeting Email Template). The email will be addressed to program directors. It will introduce the study and its goals, the team that is conducting the study on HHS' behalf, and offer suggested times for a phone meeting. Attached to the email will be the project description (see Appendix B, STREAMS Project Description) and a list of questions we hope to collect during the phone call (see Appendix C, Topics for STREAMS Meeting). The phone meeting is voluntary. The study team will lead the telephone meeting using a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix D, STREAMS Semi Structured Protocol for Initial Phone Call). The study team will answer any questions about the study and ask for select programmatic information, such as the program's administrative structure, experience, target population, and program size. The protocol is designed to collect the minimum information necessary to allow us to understand the range of programming in the field, the range of perspectives on the STREAMS study, and whether particular study design options will be feasible given the structure of HMRE programs. The study team will contact up to 30 programs for an initial telephone call, with up to 3 staff per program participating in the call. \_

With a select group of programs (up to 15, with up to 4 staff per program participating), the study team will follow-up the initial phone call with a request for further discussion. An agenda will be used to guide the discussions (see Attachment E, STREAMS Agenda for Program Staff Meeting). Using a semi-structured protocol (Appendix F, STREAMS Semi Structured Protocol for Teleconference or Program Visit), the study team will seek to gain a better understanding of the program's flow and solicit feedback about the potential study designs. The follow-up will involve an in-person visit to the site or a teleconference; visits will be replaced with teleconferences whenever possible.

A limitation of this process is the information will be gathered from only a selection of HMRE programs, however the selection of programs will be prioritized in such a way to maximize the range of responses possible that may inform STREAMS design and planning.

There are no quantitative components to this study.

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

There are two main data collection efforts involved with the current request for approval.

(1) STREAMS Semi Structured Protocol for Initial Phone Call (Appendix D): An initial one-hour phone call that will use a semi-structured interview protocol. For this collection, the study team will also utilize an email template, the project description, and a handout that lists topics for the discussion.

(2) STREAMS Semi Structured Protocol for Teleconference or Program Visit (Appendix F): Subsequent visits or teleconferences based on a semi-structured interview protocol. For this collection, the study team will also utilize a site visit agenda template and the project description.

Both protocols cover similar research questions. However, there is additional time allotted for the visits and follow-up teleconferences to allow for more detail to be shared about the STREAMS study, and for the program to share more details about its services and operations.

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

The burden on HMRE programs is minimal and the study team plans to use improved information technology wherever possible. When information is available from the internet, it will supplement

requests for information. To the extent possible, meetings will be done by telephone to reduce burden on program operators and their stakeholders.

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

To our knowledge, systematic information about current HMRE services and operations is not available. The study team has reviewed the list of current HMRE grantees, looked at their websites and enrollment information, and spoken with experts in the field. The information needed to address the study's research questions was not found.

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

We expect most of the programs in the study will be small, non-profit organizations. Burden will be minimized for respondents by restricting the interview length to the minimum required, by conducting telephone and in-person discussions at times convenient for the respondents, and by requiring no record-keeping or written responses on the part of the programs.

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

The study team proposes a multi-staged process for gathering information from local programs. This preliminary step will provide critical information for designing the rest of the STREAMS study. Without the information requested for this phase of the study, it would be difficult to move forward with the next stages (e.g., site recruitment, baseline and follow-up surveys). The approach attempts to limit the scope of conversations to just the information needed for the current phase of the project. Further, by conducting initial telephone calls with a larger number of programs, we will avoid undue burden because not all conversations will warrant follow-up visits or telephone calls.

#### **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)), ACF 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 September 15, 2014, Volume 79, Number 178, page 54985, and provided a 60-day period for public comment. During the notice and comment period, the government did not receive any comments in response to the Federal Register notice.

##### ***Consultation with Experts Outside of the Study***

A panel of experts in HMRE programming and research provided consultation to the STREAMS study team and ACF staff on May 21, 2015.

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

No incentives for respondents are proposed for this information collection.

## A10. Privacy of Respondents

As specified in the contract, the Contractor shall protect respondent privacy to the extent permitted by law and will comply with all Federal and Departmental regulations for private information. The Contractor shall ensure that all of its employees, subcontractors (at all tiers), and employees of each subcontractor, who perform work under this contract/subcontract, are trained on data privacy issues and comply with the above requirements. Respondents are not considered human subjects, but they will still be informed of all planned uses of data, that their participation is voluntary, that some of the information they provide may be shared with OPRE to help us design the study, and that any information they request to be kept private will be kept private to the extent permitted by law.

## A11. Sensitive Questions

There are no sensitive questions in this data collection.

## A12. Estimation of Information Collection Burden

Program directors will review materials and speak with a study team member about their HMRE program. These persons will not incur any expense other than the time spent answering questions.

### Total Burden Requested Under this Information Collection

Instrument	Total/Annual Number of Respondents	Number of Responses Per Respondent	Average Burden Hours Per Response	Annual Burden Hours	Average Hourly Wage	Total Annual Cost
STREAMS Semi-Structured Protocol for Initial Phone Call	90	1	1	90	\$29.83	\$2,684.70
STREAMS Semi-Structured Protocol for Teleconference or Program Visit	60	1	3	180	\$29.83	\$5,369.40
<b>Estimated Annual Burden Total</b>				270		<b>\$8,054.10</b>

### Total Annual Cost

To compute the total estimated annual cost, the total burden hours were multiplied by the estimated average hourly wage for local program directors (see table above). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Current Population Survey 2014, the median hourly wage for full-time employees over age 25 with a bachelor's degree or higher is \$29.83.

## A13. Cost Burden to Respondents or Record Keepers

There are no additional costs to respondents.

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

The total estimated cost for the Federal Government for the data collection activities under this current request will be \$117,579. This includes personnel effort plus other direct and indirect costs.

**A15. Change in Burden**

This is an individual information collection request under generic clearance 0970-0356.

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

The information collected will be used primarily to plan the research design and subsequent data collection efforts for STREAMS. Initial calls to program directors for the purpose of information gathering will take place starting in Quarter 3 2015 and continue into Quarter 4 2015. Site visits and additional teleconferences will occur during Quarters 3 and 4 2015. There are no plans to publish the information collected under this request. Plans for use of data collected during the project will be explained in a subsequent package.

**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.