



What is the focus of this study?

Strong, supportive families are critical to the health and well-being of children. Since 2005, Congress has authorized federal funding for healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs to encourage the formation of healthy relationships and stable, two-parent families. Administered by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the grants support programs that offer HMRE programming to couples, adult individuals, and youth.

Research has shown that HMRE programs often face implementation challenges in areas such as recruitment, participation, and program completion. In 2019, ACF's Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) contracted with Mathematica and its subcontractor Public Strategies to conduct the SIMR project to develop and test promising implementation solutions to these challenges.

What activities will the study pursue?

SIMR will use rapid-cycle learning to pilot and refine promising solutions. Rapid-cycle learning involves testing and refining solutions in a series of short cycles to pilot the solution, collect and analyze data on the pilot, refine the solution, and try it again. By helping HMRE grantees address implementation challenges, SIMR will also build their readiness for evaluation of program effects. Specifically, the SIMR team will:

- Identify implementation challenges and solutions that are supported by evidence
- Identify and partner with HMRE programs to participate in rapid-cycle learning
- Work closely with program partners to pilot test and refine the solutions
- Recommend program partners for participation in a possible future evaluation
- Obtain input from research and programmatic experts and stakeholders to ensure the study includes diverse perspectives

What will the study produce?

The SIMR team will share findings widely, including:

- A synthesis of common implementation challenges in HMRE programs and promising solutions
- A description of program partners and plans for piloting solutions to common implementation challenges
- Rapid-cycle learning findings about the feasibility of using specific solutions, and how well they worked

To find out more

Contact the key project staff:

Rob Wood, project director (RWood@Mathematica-mpr.com) or Daniel Friend, deputy project director (DFriend@Mathematica-mpr.com).

Contact the OPRE project officers:

Samantha Illangasekare (Samantha.Illangasekare@acf.hhs.gov) or Shirley Adelstein (Shirley.Adelstein@acf.hhs.gov).

NOTE: The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to gather preliminary information about the healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) field and explore with HMRE programs the research questions that are of interest and the design options that are feasible. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number and expiration date for this collection are OMB #: 0970-0356, Exp: 06/30/2021. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Robert Wood; RWood@Mathematica-mpr.com

August 2020

mathematica.org



Princeton, NJ • Ann Arbor, MI • Cambridge, MA • Chicago, IL • Oakland, CA • Seattle, WA • Tucson, AZ • Woodlawn, MD • Washington, DC

