



## National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families

### The Director's Corner

Greetings,

December has been designated as National Stress-Free Holiday Month. Although a stress-free holiday may not be realistic, there are things we can do to help reduce stress for ourselves and the families we serve. Positive communication plays an important role in managing expectations during the holiday season. This is particularly important for families in transition.

Transitions related to incarceration or reentry as well as to adopting or fostering a child can be stressful. In addition to altering normal routines, these transitions can also impact the holiday traditions or rituals that family members look forward to each year. Talk openly about family transitions and discuss creative ways to include everyone in holiday activities even if it means starting a new family tradition.

This month's Tip focuses on the importance of creating and nurturing family traditions. The resources below offer additional ideas for supporting families through transition including helping them establish and maintain healthy relationships that include positive communication and conflict resolution skills.

We wish for you and the families you serve a safe, happy, stress-free holiday season!

Best Regards,

Robyn Cenizal, Project Director



### Tip of the Month

Your monthly tip to strengthen the relationships of those you serve. *Share it - Post it - Pass it on!*

Back in September, we highlighted the importance of shared values. Traditions have been described as outward signs of inner values. Traditions strengthen relationships by providing stress-reducing stability and shared meaning, which is why positive communication is so important when traditions are affected by family transitions. Traditions need not be formal:

- Foster and adoptive families can ask children to share favorite holiday memories and discuss ways to blend some of the ideas to create new family traditions like baking cookies AND watching their favorite holiday movie.
- A custodial and non-custodial parent can work out a holiday visitation plan with and for their shared children, advise extended family members of the plan in advance, and support one another in sticking to it each year.
- Family members can share pictures of family activities like baking or shopping to stay connected to family members who can't be home for the holidays.
- Adults reentering family life after extended time apart (e.g., military deployment, prison term) can renew a ritual from before the separation or create new ones. They may consider rescheduling a family celebration for the week or month after reentry so it occurs when the family is back together.



## Featured Resources

The Resource Center's [Virtual Library](#) has collected more than 600 materials in a variety of formats including fact sheets, research-to-practice briefs, brochures, pamphlets, training resources, program reports or evaluations, and research materials.

Select the links below to view our featured December resources:

- [How relationship education leads to stronger foster and adoptive families \(Fact Sheet\)](#)  
This fact sheet examines how integrating healthy marriage and relationship education into services for foster and adoptive families is critical to helping families stay together so they can provide a strong base for their children's well-being.
- [Healthy relationships, employment, and reentry \(Research to Practice Brief\)](#)  
This brief provides an overview of the evidence supporting the interrelatedness of employment, healthy relationships, family well-being, and recidivism. It also gives the perspectives of expert program practitioners who are successfully integrating programming related to employment, prison reentry, healthy relationships, and responsible fatherhood.
- [Encouraging effective coparenting in blended families \(Research to Practice Brief\)](#)  
This brief reviews current research on the unique experiences of blended families and suggests practices to improve effective coparenting.



## Events

The Resource Center's [Events Calendar](#) offers a listing of Resource Center events and other national, regional, and community-wide events that might be of interest. Upcoming events include:

- On **December 12th**, the Resource Center convened the **New York Integration Institute** in Saratoga Springs, NY--a one day training event for safety-net service providers across the State of New York. Attendees were given the opportunity to share information regarding their agencies' current efforts to promote relationship skills; participate in facilitated discussions regarding healthy marriage and relationship education skills and integration strategies; and engage in consensus building and action planning activities. If you would like more information on upcoming institutes or to organize an event in your state or area, please [contact us](#).
- [Beyond Housing: A National Convention on Child Homelessness and Poverty 2014 Conference in New York City, NY, January 15-17, 2014](#): The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) invites service providers, practitioners, policy makers, homeless and formerly homeless individuals, advocates, researchers, and members of the media to submit presentation proposals for the Beyond Housing 2014 Conference in January. Conference sessions will provide an opportunity to build bridges between service providers and policy makers, and between practitioners and researchers, helping colleagues across the field to imagine new and dynamic ways to reduce the impact of poverty and homelessness on children and families.
- [Legacies of the War on Poverty, Lessons for the Future in Washington, DC, January 8, 2014](#): The event, sponsored by the National Poverty Center at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, the Russell Sage Foundation, and Spotlight on Poverty and Opportunity, will focus on research highlighted in a new book, *Legacies of the War on Poverty* (Russell Sage Foundation, September 2013). The panel will feature a discussion among the book's editors and commentators from across the political spectrum who will address policy interventions that grew out of the War on Poverty and take a fresh look at strategies to fight poverty and promote opportunity.

## Feedback and Technical Assistance:

If you have suggestions or wish to speak with a Resource Center staff member, please [contact us](#) and we will be happy to assist you. If you would like to request Technical Assistance, please submit a [Training and Technical Assistance Request Form](#) and our Technical Assistance Coordinator will contact you.

To learn more about the Resource Center visit us at [www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org](http://www.healthymarriageandfamilies.org)

The National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families supports safety-net service providers as they integrate healthy marriage and relationship education skills into service delivery systems as part of a comprehensive, culturally appropriate, family-centered approach designed to promote self-sufficiency.

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