

First Steps for Integration Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

Tuesday, May 14, 2013; 2pm ET

Question: If I'm in a state that doesn't have an Institute or won't have one soon, how can I get started on this? What should I do?

Answer: *From Robyn Cenizal, Project Director, National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families*

I would suggest that you go online and visit the Resource Center Website and fill out a training and technical assistance request form. And that way we'll get the information and we can internally process it and reach out to you and develop a strategy based on where you are in your process.

Question: How can I find somebody like Dave Schramm or with a Cooperative Extension in my state? Would you be able to tell us a little bit about the services provided through the Cooperative Extension?

Answer: *From Ted Futris, Training and Technical Assistance, National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families*

Every state has a land grant university so the first step is to find out who - where that land grant university is in your state. That land grant university usually has a three-part mission of teaching, research and outreach.

Many folks might be familiar with 4-H which serves and works with youth. But there are also other services like Agriculture that works with our rural and as well as growing urban communities.

But also family consumer sciences which provide resources on many topics related - that - to healthy marriage and relationship education that also facilitate healthy marriages and relationships including relationships, education, parenting education, financial, literacy education as well as some other services in nutrition, housing, health, et cetera. So reach out to your - find your land grant university, identify - and then contact them.

Many states have websites, extension websites that you can look up. So if you were to just simply do a Google search for Cooperative Extension and put your state's name in it so "Cooperative Extension Georgia" and you will receive Georgia Cooperative Extension will come up. And you can look - usually look for someone in the family human development area for some support in this area.

Question: What are the specific skills that are taught in building interpersonal relationships?

Answer: *From Susan Savage, Deputy Director, Children's Division, Jefferson City, Missouri*

So it's a day-long sort of course but it really sort of focuses on how you go about being intentional in your choices, the choices about being in a relationship, who you're in a relationship with, intentional in your choices once you're in a relationship.

That relationships aren't about you know, they "just sort of happen," but that you have to commit time and energy to them and be intentional about them, how to be respectful of your partner's thoughts and feelings, how to express sincere interest with your partner.

Just really it's very - it's not really rocket science, you know, and when you go through the course it's like, "Oh, yes, oh, I do that, oh, I could do better at that." I mean, it's just really kind of common sense, very concrete kind of skills, I think.

From Geneva Rodriguez, Surveillance Officer, Adult Probation, Phoenix, Arizona

I think we focus a lot on communication. That seems to be where the lack is and it has to do with where our clientele comes from in the prison and what they're used to in regards to communication and then coming back out where the spouse or the family - no one acts like that out here.

And having that ability to communicate in a healthy way and if that communication is broken down and it becomes an argument how to deal with that argument and how to recognize that at a certain junction that there's no compromise at this point and maybe you need to step away from what you're discussing or arguing about.

That seems to be very key, having that simple skill of being able to communicate, recognize when you're at a junction you can't move forward and stepping away and getting a third party like your counselor involved or probation who's been through the training and helping to deal with that conflict at home.

From Takeda LeGrand, Family & Consumer Sciences Education Consultant, Raleigh, North Carolina

In addition to the ones that were mentioned our curriculum contains conflict resolution, decision-making, group dynamic goal-setting in the family unit.

Question: Do you (Takeda LeGrand) provide healthy relationship programming to parents of school students?

Answer: *From Takeda LeGrand, Family & Consumer Sciences Education Consultant, Raleigh, North Carolina*

That is beyond the scope of my job description. However, we do have in certain schools, we have student support chains and that may be something that they may incorporate into their program which includes outreach beyond a school to deal with certain issues.

They may be called child family support teams where they may consist of an administrator from the school or a social worker or maybe a nurse. And they may use those types of skills. Curriculum development goal was my scope of work. I'm going to have to say no.

Question: What's the best advice for getting buy-in from leadership?

Answer: *From Susan Savage, Deputy Director, Children's Division, Jefferson City, Missouri*

I am sort of leadership but I think what really - and certainly I have the buy-in of my director but I think what really finally spoke to me was when you were talking - they were talking in a language that I could understand, that I can relate to as a social worker.

So when you're framing it in the context for me of child safety, child permanency, child wellbeing, in that kind of context it really got my attention and better able to get the attention of other audiences we were, you know, seeking to share this information with. I think that's pretty key. And once you do that they're like "Oh, this is how this fits with what I've - what my mission and vision is." And I think that's really the key.

From Geneva Rodriguez, Surveillance Officer, Adult Probation, Phoenix, Arizona

You know, with buy-in on my leadership I would have to agree with Susan and that's a good way to go and, you know, like I said show your enthusiasm about it.

But my department is also very number-oriented so if you can show them that, you know, healthy marriages end up reducing recidivism, reducing the amount of crime out there, in my case.

And additionally my department likes to do joint ventures, have collaborations so being able to say I have a collaboration with Agency A, B and C really looks good for your agency or your department. Put that in there. Show them that building these relationships builds their name, builds our department and kind of puts us out there as kind of putting the leading role into getting stuff like this started. So that's another way I would suggest getting buy-in.