

## Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM)

### OVERVIEW

Launched in 2003, Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM) is a year-long healthy marriage education program that includes workshops, individualized support services, and supplementary activities. The purpose of the program is to help couples appreciate the expectations and commitments that are part of marriage; manage marital conflict; strengthen their relationships overall; and improve their parenting skills. Five of the 10 programs offered services in English and Spanish and a sixth program offered services exclusively in Spanish.

See [\*OPRE Report 2012-09 Catalog of Research: Programs for Low—Income Couples \(May 2012\)\*](#), [\*The Supporting Healthy Marriage Evaluation: Early Impacts on Low-Income Families\*](#), and [\*The Supporting Healthy Marriage Evaluation: A Family-Strengthening Program for Low-Income Families: Final Impacts from the Supporting Healthy Marriage Evaluation\*](#) for more information.

### Focus

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

#### Target Population

Low-income married couples with at least one child under the age of eighteen

#### Service Delivery Unit

Couples

#### Curriculum

- Supporting Healthy Marriage (SHM)
- Programs use one of four curricula adapted for use in SHM: Within Our Reach (WOR); For Our Family, For Our Future (FOF); Loving Couples, Loving Children (LCLC); and the Becoming Parents Program (BPP).

#### Dosage

One year

#### Setting

Community Based Organizations

#### Location

1) Oklahoma City, OK; 2) Wichita, K; 3) Shoreline, WA; 4) Bronx, NY; 5) Orlando, FL; 6) Bethlehem, PA; 7) Reading, PA; 8) El Paso, TX; 9) San Antonio; TX; 10) Seattle, WA.

#### Adapted and/or Created for Hispanic Population

Offered in Spanish at six of the 10 sites

## Demographics of Population Served

- 43.4% Hispanic
- 80.9% married
- 50.3% both spouses had at least a high school diploma

## PROGRAM EVALUATION

### Evaluated Population

6,298 couples were randomly assigned to the test group (those who received SHM) or to the control group (those who did not receive SHM)

### Study Design

- Randomized Control Trial (RTC) experimental evaluation
- 12-month follow-up and 30-month follow-up

### Outcomes

Relationship status and quality; Well-being; Co-parenting; Domestic violence

### Results

#### 12-month follow-up

- *Relationship status and quality*
  - Participants in the test group had more favorable outcomes than those in the control group in terms of couples' relationship happiness, either spouse's reports that the marriage is in trouble, men's and women's reports of warmth and support, men's and women's report of positive communication, and men's and women's report of negative behavior and emotions.
  - There were no differences between the test group and control group in terms of the percent married, infidelity, men's and women's observed warmth and support, men's and women's observed positive communication, and men's and women's observed anger and hostility.
- *Well-being*
  - Participants in the test group reported lower psychological distress compared to those in the control group.
- *Co-parenting*
  - There were no differences between the test and control groups.
- *Domestic violence*
  - Participants in the test group had lower levels of psychological abuse compared to those in the control group.
  - There was slightly fewer reported physical assaults by men from the test group compared to the control group.

#### 30-month follow-up

- *Relationship status and quality*
  - SHM has no positive impacts on relationship status.
  - SHM improved two measures of couples' appraisals of the quality of their marital relationship
- *Well-being*



- Participants in the test group reported lower psychological distress compared to those in the control group.
- *Co-parenting*
  - There were no differences between the test and control groups.
- *Domestic violence*
  - Participants in the test group had lower levels of psychological abuse compared to those in the control group.
  - There were no differences between test and control groups in reported physical assaults.

### Results for Hispanic Subgroups

- At the 12-month follow-up, some evidence suggests that the positive estimated impacts of SHM are somewhat larger and more consistent for Hispanic couples.
- At the 30-month follow-up, there were significant subgroup differences for couples in which both individuals were Hispanic for marital appraisals and warm and support in relationships. However, the authors of the evaluation caution against finding meaning in differences by race/ethnicity.

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