

deprivation endemic to the refugee condition. Refugees in the U.S. face many challenges. The pressure of their new American environment may weaken the strong, positive family relationships that refugees have brought with them to the United States.

Family relationships may undergo strain and transformation when refugees resettle in the U.S. Strong authoritarian and sometimes patriarchal family structures may provoke conflicts when members take on new roles as they adapt to American culture. For example, school/parent relationships may differ from those in their home countries and may produce miscommunication and tension; refugee parents may have concerns or object to the range of freedom American youth are afforded; and the physical disciplinary practices between a husband and wife or between parents and children may differ from what is the norm or legal in the U.S. The low wages of entry-level jobs may force both adults to work outside the home, thereby disrupting traditional roles. Typically, low incomes force refugee households to locate in neighborhoods with high crime rates. Poor public transportation adds to time spent away from family members and complicates efforts to access services and participate in community activities. The resulting strain from these difficulties may damage refugee marriages, families, and communities.

Marriage education can help refugee couples strengthen and adjust relationship skills and help them cope with the difficulties of their new American environment with the result of improving the quality of family life. Along with the skills that enable couples to communicate more effectively, manage conflict and work together as a team, marriage education can also teach the benefits that can be obtained from identifying future challenges in their relationships so that these challenges can be successfully negotiated when they arise.

Research reveals that the benefits of healthy marriages are particularly beneficial for children. On average, children raised by parents in healthy marriages are less likely to fail at school, suffer an emotional or behavioral problem requiring psychiatric treatment, be victims of child abuse and neglect, get into trouble with the law, use illicit drugs, smoke cigarettes, abuse alcohol, engage in early and promiscuous sexual activity, grow up in poverty, or attempt suicide. On average children raised by parents in healthy marriages are more likely to have a higher sense of self-esteem, form healthy marriages when

they marry, attend college, and are physically healthier.

In summary, under this set-aside ORR seeks to provide opportunities for states to offer to refugees, entrants, asylees, Amerasians, and victims of trafficking programs for strengthening marital and parenting skills within healthy and supportive relationships. ORR also seeks to expand understanding of the refugees' marriage and family difficulties in the resettlement experience and the factors that contribute to successfully meeting the challenges to the marriage relationship. If the issues faced by refugee families are addressed early through marriage education, the problems they encounter may be reduced or prevented and refugee families can work towards achieving the bright future they seek in the U.S.

Services to be rendered should be, to the extent possible, culturally and linguistically compatible to the refugee populations. Permissible marriage promotion activities to ORR-eligible populations include the following:

- Offering marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs
- Offering marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement for non-married pregnant women and non-married expectant fathers.
- Offering pre-marital education and marriage skills training or workshops for engaged couples and for couples or individuals interested in marriage.
- Providing marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples.
- Creating divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills.
- Training program staff in why marriage matters, what to expect in marriage, the knowledge and skills necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage, and examples of marriage education programs and resources.
- Training program participants and clients in why marriage matters, what to expect in marriage, and the knowledge and skills to make a healthy marriage a reality.
- Training qualified participants to be marriage program leaders, facilitators and mentors.
- Creating marriage mentoring programs that use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities.
- Training experienced couples to be mentors as a strategy to assist newly married couples, new parents,

stepfamilies or other couples facing special challenges.

- Providing vouchers for registration and materials to program staff and participants who attend marriage education activities. For example, a young woman or man considering marriage could be given vouchers to take a premarital inventory and a marriage education class, workshop, or weekend seminar. Similarly a newlywed couple, expecting their first child, could be given vouchers to attend a marriage education program.

- Providing vouchers for mediation services, marital counseling, or marriage education programs designed for those having serious marital problems, prior to separation or divorce.

- Establishing a resource center or library of books and videos on marriage for staff and clients at program service center offices.

- Developing and using a referral list of local marriage education programs and resources.

- Establishing institutional partnerships and collaboration networks with community mental health agencies, courts, local colleges and universities or the USDA's Extension Service regarding marriage education.

- Sponsoring training events on marriage education for local agencies that serve refugees.

- Hosting events for unmarried couples and weekly or monthly couples' nights with specific activities to encourage participation of couples. Provide child care if possible.

- Hosting a couples' night on a quarterly basis to celebrate marriage anniversaries and to provide brief educational activities that sustain healthy marriages.

- Including a marriage component in parenting programs.

- Gathering baseline data, establishing performance objectives and measures, and evaluating marriage education program activities.

- Providing marital health assessment quizzes and questionnaires with appropriate referrals when warranted.

- Using a marriage protocol to ask about the marital relationship in addition to parenting and other family relationships during intake, assessment, or follow-up interviews.

- Providing programs that help refugee teenagers prepare for healthy dating relationships, develop relationship skills, learn budgeting, and learn the value of marriage.

ORR has assembled a program guide entitled "Web-based Program Planning for Healthy Marriages Grants", which explains marriage education more fully and provides reference material useful