



Module 3 Handout

Offering Relationship and Marriage Education (RME) in Your Community

Planning successful RME programs requires asking a series of questions related to the larger environment, the community setting, the educational program and the target population. Use the questions below, to guide program planning efforts in your organization and/or community collaboration.

1. **Environment:** This includes all federal, state and local policies, public and private initiatives, funding streams that could support a marriage program, and the cultural and social-political environment.
 - a. How will we fund the program?
 - i. Use a mix of sources from government grants, foundation grants, client fees and private donations?
 - ii. Charge client fees?
 - iii. Rely solely on public funding, including pooling the resources of several different agencies?
 - b. How involved will our program be with local, state and/or federal healthy marriage initiatives?
 - i. Are we fully aware of and on board? Have we spoken to national leaders and have convened key persons in our organization and community to discuss the possibilities of implementing a program? Are we ready to seek funding for our efforts?
 - ii. Are we exploring whether and how the healthy marriage initiative fits with our organizational mission and community culture? Are we interested in learning more?
 - iii. Are we hesitant to get involved with the healthy marriage initiative? Is it right or a good fit for our organization and community?
 - iv. Are members of my organization and our community aware of the healthy marriage initiative?
 - c. How knowledgeable are we about existing RME programs in the community?
 - i. Are we highly aware of RME that is offered in the community? Do we know who to call for more information? Do we routinely partner with these organizations?
 - ii. Do we have some degree of awareness of RME programs and activities in the community and might even collaborate with these providers occasionally?
 - iii. Do we have no knowledge of other RME programs in the community? Is it possible that this kind of education does not exist in our community?



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2. **Setting:** The location where the RME program is delivered and generally the organizational context in which the program operates.
 - a. What type of organizational structure do we want?
 - i. Do we want a free standing, single program where operations are not integrated into a larger system?
 - ii. Do we want a program that operates within a system or community that will influence the operations of the program? For examples, RME programs in extension offices or churches are influenced by the institutional system.
 - iii. Joint Efforts: Do we want the program to be the combined efforts of two or more agencies or organizations?
 - b. What level of collaboration do we want? How formal do we want our collaborations to be in offering RME?
 - i. Informal collaboration: Will we informally work together to offer RME? For examples, will other agencies provide referrals to our program and give us space to hold sessions?
 - ii. Formal collaboration: Will we formally develop contractual arrangements or memorandums of understanding with other groups?
 - c. Staffing refers to provider backgrounds and credentials that facilitators of RME will have. Who will provide RME?
 - i. Family life educators?
 - ii. Mental health professionals?
 - iii. Health care providers?
 - iv. Social workers?
 - v. Ministers?
 - vi. Trained paraprofessionals or volunteers?
 - d. Services or programs tend to fall on a continuum related to the services are currently provided and how those services relate to RME. What level of RME services do you want deliver?
 - i. Just marriage: Will we focus only on education for marriage and relationship skill building?
 - ii. Marriage and therapy: Will we offer marriage education plus individual therapy for individuals or couples who would benefit from it?
 - iii. Marriage plus: Will we offer marriage education along with other services not directly related to marriage, such as employment training and counseling or money management education?
 - iv. Family Support: Will we integrate marriage and relationship education into existing programs designed to support families, such as home visiting programs for at-risk new mothers?



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3. **Participants:** These are the persons that are served by the RME.
 - a. Populations served: Which groups do we hope to target with our efforts? Primarily, low-income populations? OR primarily middle or upper income populations?
 - i. For middle and upper income groups, RME curricula are widely available. Which of these curricula will we use?
 - ii. For lower-income groups, RME is typically not a part of their menu of services; their services focus primarily on meeting basic needs or building human capital. Is there a provider of RME in our community to which we can refer low-income couples? Or can we add marriage education to our current menu of services?
 - b. Attendance: What volume of participants do we want to serve?
 - i. How many participants do we hope to reach, especially during the first year?
 - ii. What barriers will there be to participating in the program? How can we overcome these barriers?
 - iii. What avenues are available to use to market our program and recruit interested participants?
 - c. Target Stage: What stage or stages of relationships are we going to target? Those couples who are:
 - i. Premarital?
 - ii. Have their first baby?
 - iii. In crisis?
 - iv. Youth?
 - v. Young adults?
 - vi. Raising children?
 - vii. Empty nesters or caring for elderly parents?
 - viii. Step families?
4. **Educational program:** refers to the kind of contact you will have with participants; it always involves some face-to-face interaction with the target population.
 - a. Curriculum: What curriculum do we plan to use? Do we plan to adapt pieces from several curricula? Do we plan to develop our own curriculum?
 - b. Dosage: How long will the sessions be and how many sessions will we offer?
 - c. Format:
 - i. Individual or Couple: Will we offer education to one individual or couple at a time in their home or some other location? This format lends itself to a more therapeutic approach, and can be better adapted to the individual's or couple's needs.
 - ii. Classroom: Will we offer educational sessions to a group of individuals or couples? This format tends to include of lecture and interactive activities. Oftentimes, information is presented and then people have a chance to apply the information.



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- iii. Support Group: Will be bring together a group of participants to discuss specific topics with the help of a trained facilitator? This format can be highly interactive and may or may not use a specific curriculum.
- d. Approach:
 - i. What is the primary purpose of the intervention? Although you may focus on all three purposes, you will want to think about which of these purposes is central to your effort.
 - 1. Are we interested in strengthening the couple relationship as the primary means of solving other problems people face?
 - 2. Are we interested in strengthening people's human capital (education, job training and income) so that they can have the opportunity to marry?
 - 3. Are we interested in helping families meet their basic needs for food and shelter so that they can address their relationship issues?
 - ii. What will be the focus or target of the intervention?
 - 1. Couple (i.e., relationship skill building)?
 - 2. Child (i.e., combining relationship skill building with parenting education)?
 - 3. Family (i.e., combining relationship skill building, parenting education and family strengths education)?
 - iii. What will be the orientation of the intervention? Should our program more on relationship skill building or should we offer a more therapeutic approach that deals with people's deeper issues?
- 5. **Participants:** These are the persons that are served by the RME.
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From a report originally prepared by:

Macomber, J. E., Murray, J. and Stagner, M. (2005). *Service Delivery and Evaluation Design Options for Strengthening and Promoting Healthy Marriages: Investigation of Program to Strengthen and Support Healthy Marriages*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.