

African American Healthy Marriage Initiative

A Targeted Strategy for Working Effectively with African American Communities

◆ What is the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI)?

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Healthy Marriage Initiative seeks to improve child well-being by helping those who choose marriage for themselves to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages. Research demonstrates the strong correlation between family structure and a family's social and economic well-being. Congress recognized the fact that two-parent, married families represent the ideal environment for raising children and incorporated marriage, family formation and fatherhood as key components in welfare reform legislation, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), enacted in 1996.

The AAHMI is a component of the ACF Healthy Marriage Initiative and more specifically promotes a culturally competent strategy for fostering healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, improving child well-being and strengthening families within the African American Community. Cultural orientation, traditions and practices form a diversity of beliefs, attitudes, interpersonal styles and behaviors. Differences in age, race, ethnicity, gender, education, religious background and socio-economic status can influence how people and organizations view and respond to ACF's healthy marriage activities.

◆ Why is a focused strategy needed for the African American Community?

- ◆ Perception that the healthy marriage initiative has not considered the unique experiences of this population;
- ◆ Clear link between healthy marriage and child well-being;
- ◆ Crisis-level statistics (e.g. rates of divorce and non-married child-bearing)
 1. 41% of African-American adults are married, compared to 62% of whites & 60% of Hispanics (2000)
 2. Twenty-three divorces per 1000 AA couples per year; 19 for whites (1990)
 3. 69% of AA births are to unmarried women, compared to 25% for whites and 42% for Hispanics (1998)
 4. 55% of AA children live with single parents, compared to 23% of white children and 31% of Hispanic children (1998)

◆ What does the focused strategy include? Three components:

- ◆ Education and Communication
- ◆ Enhancement of Partnerships
- ◆ Identifying Resources

◆ How will the AAHMI be implemented?

The Assistant Secretary of ACF has designated co-leads for the AAHMI. A Steering Committee for the AAHMI has been formed that includes representation from various ACF program offices. The AAHMI will reach out to external partners and stakeholders and identify broad-based national and local coalitions in the successful development and implementation of this very important strategy.

