

Building Bridges Between the Healthy Marriage, Responsible Fatherhood, and Domestic Violence Movements: Issues, Concerns, and Recommendations

By Paula Roberts

Introduction

In 2002, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) launched a Healthy Marriage Initiative. A number of states—including Oklahoma, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas—also began healthy marriage projects in the last four years. These initiatives funded a number of state and local programs to strengthen existing marriages and prepare interested individuals and couples for marriage in the future. While no formal evaluation of these projects has been issued, many policy lessons have been learned. Among them are 1) the importance of paying attention to the needs of poor men if the projects are to succeed in low-income communities and 2) the necessity of having and implementing a policy for dealing with domestic

violence issues if they arise for individuals or couples participating in the programs.

Building on these initiatives, recently enacted federal legislation allocates substantial new funding for healthy marriage efforts. The legislation also provides new funding for responsible fatherhood programs. Embedded in the legislation is a requirement that programs consult with domestic violence experts and develop protocols for dealing with domestic violence issues.¹ This will result in a strong emphasis on collaboration between those who seek to promote healthy marriage, those working in the responsible fatherhood field, and those addressing domestic violence issues.

For many this collaboration will be a new experience. For others the collaboration will build on efforts already underway between at least two of the three fields.² For example, the Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development in Baltimore, Maryland (a responsible fatherhood program) has

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This is the seventh publication in the Couples and Marriage research and policy brief series. It explores how the healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, and domestic violence communities can work together to promote the well-being of families and children. The brief explains some of the barriers to building bridges between the three communities, and it suggests issues around which cooperative work is possible. The author wishes to thank Jacqueline Boggess of the Center for Family Policy and Practice, Ron Nichols of the National Center for Fathering, and Theo Ooms of CLASP for their helpful comments and suggestions on this publication.

This policy brief series is informed by a "Marriage-Plus" perspective, which has two main goals, both centered on the well-being of children: 1) to help more children grow up in healthy, married families, and 2) when this isn't possible, to help parents—whether unmarried, separated, divorced, or remarried—cooperate better in raising their children.

worked with a domestic violence program called the House of Ruth for years; and the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative reached out to domestic violence advocates early in program development and continues to have an active, working partnership.

About the Author

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In an effort to capture what has been learned and to identify barriers to the interaction by the three communities, the Center for Law and Social Policy and the National Conference of State Legislatures convened a three-day meeting at the Johnson Foundation's Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin in May 2006. Forty leaders from the domestic violence, responsible fatherhood, and marriage fields met and discussed issues and tensions among their fields, identified areas of common ground, and began building bridges among their communities. This brief is based on the research done in preparation for that conference as well as on the lessons learned at the conference itself.³

Getting to Know One Another

As discussed at the Wingspread Conference, one of the biggest barriers to collaboration is a failure to understand one another's fields. While there is much diversity within each field, there are also commonalities that those in each field share. The Wingspread discussion clarified the following facts about each field—facts that need to be more widely known.

The Domestic Violence Community⁴

The domestic violence community is the oldest and farthest reaching of the three fields. During the last two decades,

community-based programs have been established in more than two thousand communities. These programs provide 24-hour crisis hotlines, individual and group support and counseling, legal and medical advice, support groups, and specialized children's services. Many also provide emergency shelter for a limited period (30-60 days). Larger programs may also provide employment and other specialized services. An increasing number of programs are culturally specific in their approaches. Batterer intervention programs are also part of this network. Although programs are extensive, there are still many underserved parts of the country (particularly in rural areas) and many populations (Native American, migrants, immigrants, disabled and older women) who have difficulty accessing appropriate services.

Funding for domestic violence programs comes from local communities and foundations, state governments, and the federal government. The federal funding comes primarily from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was enacted in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000 and 2006.

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of coercive behavior in which one person attempts to control another through threats or actual use of physical violence, sexual assault, and verbal or psychological abuse. Victims and abusers come from all ethnic

groups and cultures, all backgrounds and ages, all income levels, all faiths, all relationship types, and all education levels. Domestic violence isolates the person being abused and robs her/him of a sense of self-worth and the ability to make decisions. It also traumatizes children in the household, destroying their ability to feel safe and secure. The Power and Control Wheel (see page 3) is widely used in the domestic violence community to explain these dynamics.

While not all agree with the descriptions, in recent years, researchers and practitioners have identified three distinct types of domestic violence.⁵ They are:

- **Situational couple violence.** This is the most common type of domestic violence and occurs when a disagreement turns into an angry argument that escalates into violence. The violence can be mild or severe. This type of violence is almost as likely to be perpetrated by women as by men; but men do more serious damage, and their violence is more likely to introduce fear into the relationship.
- **Intimate terrorism.** In this type of violence, the abuser takes complete control over his partner through the use of violence in combination with other control tactics—such as threats and intimidation, economic control, psychological abuse, isolation, and the asser-

tion of male privilege. Intimate terrorism almost always involves a man victimizing a woman.

- Violent resistance. This is what happens when a victim of intimate terrorism fights

back. It is generally the violence of women trying to physically resist domination by abusive men.

All types of domestic violence are serious. Each can escalate into danger and even death.

Intervention is called for in all cases, but the nature of that intervention can be quite different depending on the type.

Understanding and dealing with domestic violence also involves understanding the cultural tradi-

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE POWER AND CONTROL WHEEL



tions and communities that victims and perpetrators come from. In some cultures, gender roles are very rigid, and male assertiveness and female passivity are expected. In some communities, violence is so imbedded in daily life that it is viewed as normal. High levels of interpersonal mistreatment may have left people inured to violence, especially in communities with high numbers of recent immigrants from war-torn areas.⁶ Sensitivity to what this means for both women and men in a community is imperative.⁷

It is also important to recognize the importance of religious traditions in addressing domestic violence issues. Some religious traditions emphasize the role of husband as the head of the family. Some prohibit divorce and place a premium on holding the family together. Such traditions can affect the behavior of both men and women. They also give rise to a concern by those working to end domestic violence that the faith-based community will not be allies in their efforts, as well as concerns among some in the faith-based sector that domestic violence advocates will undermine some of their core values about marriage.

The Responsible Fatherhood Movement⁸

The responsible fatherhood movement dates back about two decades. There are two primary strands to the movement. One is a broadly focused effort to

encourage all fathers (married, unmarried, divorced; employed, unemployed) to be more engaged with their children. These responsible fatherhood programs provide—at national, state and local levels—education, training, and support services to fathers; they also conduct broad public education campaigns about the value of fathers. Funding for these efforts comes from governments, foundations, individual contributions, and membership, as well as from payment for services such as training.⁹

The other strand of the movement focuses on low-income fathers, especially unmarried, African American, and Latino fathers.¹⁰ While community-based programs of this type date back many years, this second strand became better known and researched because of federal funding provided by the Family Support Act of 1988 for the Parent's Fair Share Demonstration projects. These projects focused on providing jobs and services to the non-resident fathers of children receiving welfare. The hope was that, with some services, these fathers could obtain jobs that would allow them to pay child support. This support, in combination with a mother's earnings, would allow a child's family to leave welfare.¹¹ The federal Parent's Fair Share funds were supplemented by contributions from major foundations and (in some places) by state/local govern-

ments. In recent years, the funding for these efforts has greatly diminished.

Both strands of the movement would agree that a *responsible father* is one who tries to:

- Wait to make a baby until he is prepared emotionally and financially to support his child
- Establish legal paternity when he becomes a father
- Actively share with the child's mother in the emotional and physical care of their child from pregnancy onward
- Provide continuing financial support for his child from pregnancy onward

Note that the emphasis here is on a father's responsibilities to his children and on the need to cooperate with the children's mother. In these respects, the responsible fatherhood movement is quite different from the "father's rights movement" with which it is sometimes confused.

The responsible fatherhood movement has a strong emphasis on education and training to help men to understand the importance of their emotional and cognitive roles. Those who focus on low-income fathers also emphasize the need to help men obtain and keep jobs so that they can contribute to their children's financial well being and make their aspirations a reality. Many programs also work with couples (especially the parents of new-

borns) around issues of shared parenting. (Since the mother is generally the child's primary caregiver, experience has shown that it is important that she is involved in and cooperates with the father's efforts.) Recently, there has also been an emphasis on helping incarcerated and about-to-be released fathers parent even when they are in jail or prison.

As with the domestic violence movement, those in the responsible fatherhood movement must address issues of culture and religion. Different cultures view fatherhood differently, and many religious traditions also have teachings about fatherhood. Often these can be helpful in framing discussions about children's need for nurture and support, as well as those about the need for fathers to be respectful of their children's mothers. Indeed, some responsible fatherhood programs are faith-based. However, many are not.

For the part of the movement that focuses primarily on low-income men in particular, the need is great and the funds are scarce. In many communities this means that it is hard to find a local responsible fatherhood program with which to work. In other communities, programs might exist but are stretched so thin already that it is hard for the leaders to feel that they can take on issues like domestic violence and marriage. It is hoped that the recently allocated

Responsible Fatherhood funding under the Deficit Reduction Act, discussed above, will ameliorate this problem.

Healthy Marriage¹²

In terms of government involvement, the *healthy marriage movement* is the new kid on the block.¹³ Historically, religious institutions have provided marriage preparation and marriage counseling services to their members. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers have provided therapy and counseling to individuals who seek help. However, government interest is a recent phenomenon. At the federal level, in 2003, 2004, and 2005, several million dollars in child support funds were given to eleven projects that provided both child support and marriage education services. These Special Improvement Projects (SIPs) went to faith-based and community-based providers as well as state, local, and tribal governments.¹⁴ Similar funds were made available through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Community Service, Office of Refugee Resettlement, and Administration for Native Americans. Evaluation and technical assistance funds have also been provided at the federal level.¹⁵ As noted above, several states have also put money into these efforts. Some have even used the funds they receive from the federal government for welfare programs (TANF) to pro-

vide services to low-income couples.¹⁶

The money has been used for public education campaigns, program development, curriculum deployment, relationships and marriage education classes, training for people offering these programs, and mentoring. Some programs have focused on immigrant communities. Some have served single parents as well as couples who are interested in improving their relationships, while others have focused on unmarried couples who are expecting a child (often referred to in the literature as "fragile families"). Efforts have also been made to reach out to teens and those in their early twenties to help them think about what a relationship that leads to a healthy marriage would look like.¹⁷ There have also been significant efforts to adapt existing curricula to make them more helpful to minority and low-income populations. Congress recently allocated another \$100 million per year for the next five years to continue and expand these activities.

A definition of "healthy marriage" is a work in progress. Most proponents would agree that a healthy marriage is one in which both spouses are committed to the relationship, communicate well, and are able to effectively resolve conflict. There is no place for violence in a healthy marriage. Indeed, some of the leading advocates of healthy marriage define it in

terms of safety: emotional safety, personal safety, safety and security in commitment, and environmental safety.¹⁸ The first three refer to the dynamics in the relationship. The fourth refers to the community in which the couple resides and the context and services that it provides. This is particularly relevant to low-income couples, whose financial status may lead them to live in more dangerous communities with fewer supportive connections. This can lead to greater levels of stress and conflict, which affect the marital relationship. From this point of view, there is an implicit link between the marriage movement and the issues that are being addressed by the domestic violence and responsible fatherhood movements. In fact, the domestic violence community's Equality Wheel, adapted from the Power and Control Wheel, graphically illustrates the connections (see page 7).

Culture and religion are also important factors in developing a healthy marriage program. As noted above, many of the earliest efforts to promote healthy, stable marriages were faith based. For many, there continues to be a faith aspect to healthy marriage efforts. However, there are also many programs that operate without a specific faith emphasis. Recently, there have also been efforts to develop approaches and materials that are more culturally spe-

cific, particularly for African American, Hispanic, and Native American communities.

The healthy marriage movement is relatively new and does not have a long track record to draw on in large, community-based efforts. Protocols and materials are still being developed and tested. This can make the other communities unsure of what the healthy marriage community is about and what its intentions are. In order to have a productive working relationship with others, the new kid may have to prove that it is sensitive to domestic violence and fatherhood issues.

Overcoming Stereotypes

In some communities, domestic violence, responsible fatherhood, and healthy marriage advocates have worked together in the past and have gotten to know one another. However, in many communities this has not happened, and the advocacy groups may have stereotypes about one another that can get in the way of developing productive relationships. This was a major topic of conversation at the Wingspread Conference.

The trouble with stereotypes is that they are usually based on a grain of truth. In any group, there may be an individual or set of individuals who exemplify the stereotype, and this is certainly true of the stereotypes discussed below. However, each movement also includes varied out-

looks and perspectives, and it is unfair to paint every person in the movement with a broad brush. Rather, it is important to recognize what preconceived notions exist and then to try to discover whether or not a particular representative of the healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, or domestic violence communities fits the stereotype. Approaching each other with an open mind can help identify those with whom there is common ground.

Below are some common—and hurtful—stereotypes that impede cooperation between the three fields. These and others need to be addressed to foster effective collaboration.

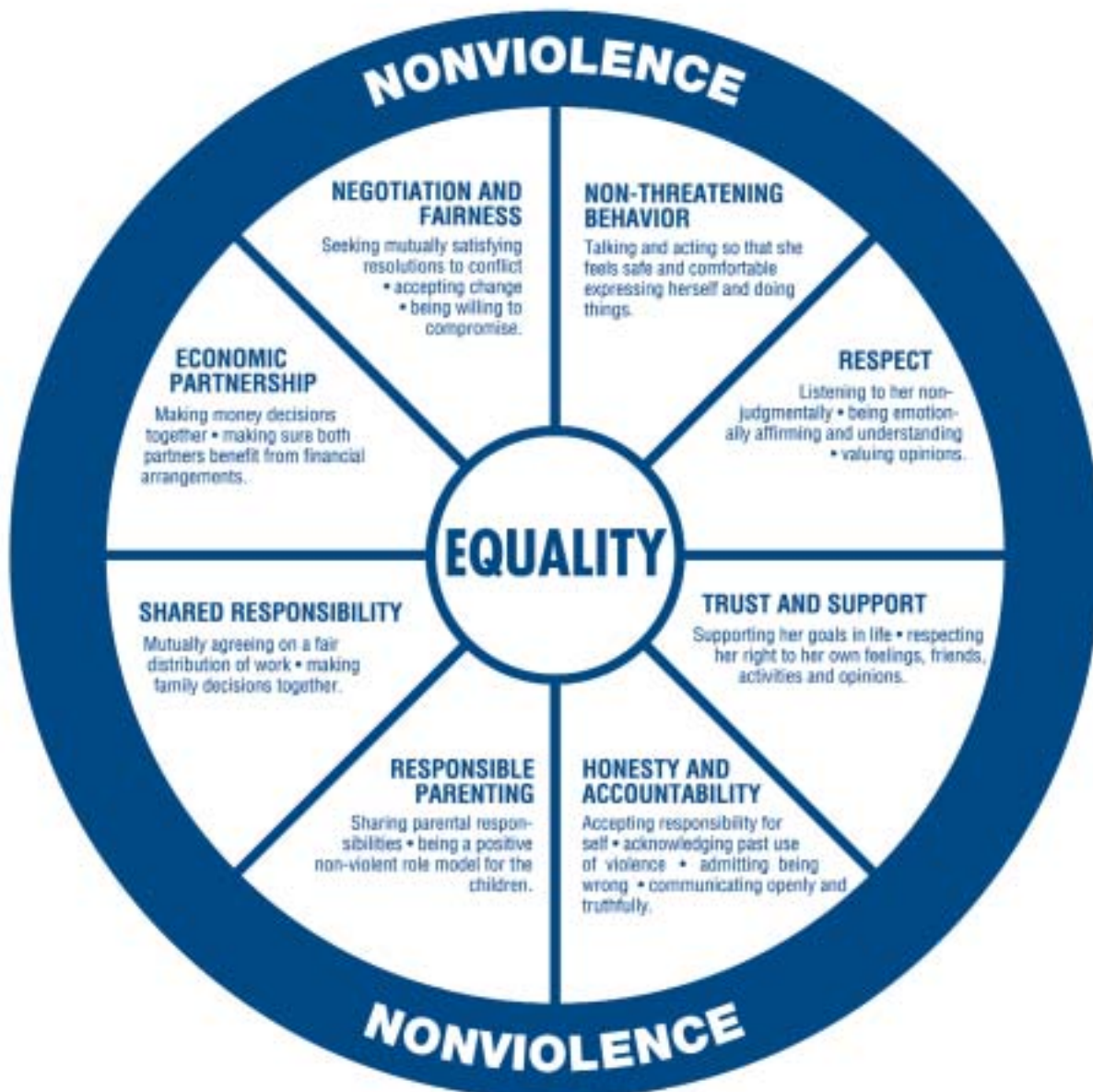
Healthy marriage advocates are just religious zealots who want to return to patriarchal marriage. It is true that many healthy marriage advocates come from a religious tradition and that their views are faith-based. However, not all healthy marriage advocates work from a faith-based perspective. Many are social workers, teachers, mental health professionals, counselors, and researchers who are driven by the facts: that most people do express a desire to be married and that children do best when raised in a married, biological parent family.²⁰ Moreover, even those with a faith-based view usually do not advocate marriage dynamics in which one partner dominates the other. They emphasize mutual respect, good communication, and non-

violent conflict resolution. Indeed, research broadly shows religious involvement to be more consistently associated with positive marital outcomes than negative.²¹

It is futile to work with faith-based programs, because organized religion looks the other way from domestic violence and encourages women to stay in violent marriages. Many in the religious community are actively involved

in combating domestic violence. They do not condone it, and they do help the victims. Moreover, many religious traditions do have strong religiously-based statements of principles that make it clear that domestic

EQUALITY WHEEL



violence is unacceptable. For example, the Catholic bishops issued (in 1992) and reissued (in 2002) *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, which names domestic violence as a sin and calls for training for clergy and laypeople so that parishes can enhance victim safety and impose batterer accountability. Evangelical Christians also have an international organization, Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH), which addresses domestic violence prevention and services. The Seattle-based Faith Trust Institute also works with a variety of religions to help them address domestic violence issues.

Domestic violence advocates are all rabidly anti-marriage. Domestic violence occurs in all types of relationships: singles, cohabiters, and spouses may all be victims. Those who seek to end domestic violence do not single out marriage as the culprit *per se*. Moreover, those who work with victims of domestic violence also recognize that many victims wish to remain in their marriages for a variety of personal, cultural, and religious reasons. For these victims, finding a way to help end the violence so that they can safely stay in their marriages is a useful and important strategy.

Responsible Fatherhood is really just another name for “father’s rights.” In truth, the responsible fatherhood movement places heavy emphasis on responsibili-

ties, not rights. There is also a strong emphasis on working with mothers, as can be seen in the definition above.

Responsible fatherhood advocates recognize that the mother’s cooperation is essential if a couple is going to be able to work together for the good of their child.

Identifying Common Beliefs and Reasons to Work Together

In overcoming stereotypes, it can be helpful to focus on why it is important to work together. Participants at the Wingspread Conference identified a number of reasons why everyone would benefit from collaboration. One obvious reason is that without collaboration, programs can be working at cross-purposes. For example, a domestic violence program might be working with a mother to help her escape a violent partner. At the same time, her partner might be participating in a responsible fatherhood program, and the couple might be attending a marriage preparation program. If the responsible fatherhood and marriage programs don’t know there is a domestic violence issue, they might encourage contact between the parties that would lead to more violence. Conversely, if the fatherhood or marriage program is working with the violent partner to develop better anger management or coping skills,²² the domestic violence program would benefit from knowing

this as it works with the victim. This is not a theoretical concern: With new funding for both fatherhood and marriage initiatives, there is an increasing possibility that separate programs will be providing services to the same individuals and couples.

It can also be helpful to identify common ground – that is, shared beliefs and goals. The Wingspread participants identified a number of core beliefs that many in each community share. These include a commitment to:

- End family and intimate partner violence.
- Support, nurture, and promote healthy relationships, healthy marriages, and responsible fatherhood.
- Increase the number of children who grow up in a family environment that is respectful and responsible and in which conflict is dealt with in a non-violent manner.
- Act with sensitivity to different cultural, educational, economic, religious, ethnic, and experiential differences.
- Respect individual autonomy and decision making.

Developing a Plan for Collaboration

There are many ways in which the three communities can work together. They include:

Information Sharing and Referral.

Each program will have privacy concerns that will need to be addressed. However, if, in the course of serving a particular individual or family, it becomes clear that services from another entity are needed, an information or referral mechanism may be helpful. For example, if a healthy marriage program is working with a couple and it becomes clear that there are domestic violence issues, what is the mechanism for informing the participants about local domestic violence programs? How should referrals be made? What if it is clear that a man would be helped by services from a responsible fatherhood program? How will this be handled?

Every community is different, and there is no “one size fits all” answer to these questions. However, if representatives from the three communities can come together, get to know each other, identify the issues, and develop a common understanding, there is much to be gained. Here are some ideas that, once trust is established, might be explored and adapted to meet the needs of program participants and provider programs:

Provide information about one another in brochures, web sites, and other materials. Programs may want to work separately but ensure that program participants

know about other available services offered by the other fields. For example, a healthy marriage program might want to let men know about a responsible fatherhood program in the community or inform women about a local domestic violence shelter. One way to do this without singling out a particular person is to provide information about other programs in the literature, web sites, or other materials available from the primary provider. The program participant will then have access to information and can decide how to use it.

Periodically cross-train staff. Programs might also want to take a more proactive approach. One way to do this is to bring program staff together for introductions and training. There are two great benefits to this approach. *First*, staff who know individuals working at another program and who understand what the mission, goals, and services of that program are can be key in developing a holistic approach to the issues—no matter the program in which an issue first arises. Connection and understanding are fostered by cross-training. *Second*, program attendees’ awareness of specific teachings and strategies of the other systems can be reassuring (e.g., encouragement in marriage education for those who are in danger to seek help so they can be safe). Because there is regular staff turnover in most programs, periodic retraining is also helpful.

Co-locate staff. In some places, it is possible for programs to be housed in the same building. Alternatively, staff from one program might spend a certain number of hours per day or days per week at one another’s facilities so that everyone sees the common purpose and can easily access other services.

Protocol Development.

Whatever the mechanism for information and referral, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs funded by the federal government will have to develop protocols for working with domestic violence programs. In addition, healthy marriage programs may want to be able to refer participants to responsible fatherhood programs, and vice versa. In particular, healthy marriage programs may want to learn from responsible fatherhood programs about how to recruit and retain male program participants, and responsible fatherhood programs may want to add a relationship component to their services.

How will this be done? Should individuals participating in another program be given preference for placement, or should they be treated like any other applicant? Does it matter if there is a waiting list for services? These are all questions that need to be worked out.

Addressing these issues will be particularly tricky around domestic violence issues.

Initially, healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs have to decide whether to screen for domestic violence issues at all. Not all agree on whether screening is effective.

If screening is desired, the process for doing so has to be decided. Few domestic violence victims or perpetrators will self-identify early on, even when asked directly. Some probing may be necessary, but this has to be done by trained, sensitive people. Moreover, some feel it is better to simply give *all* program participants written materials about services available in cases of domestic violence. This way, no individual or couple is singled out, easing the danger that can arise if a perpetrator finds his victim in possession of materials or referral forms.

In addition, some protocol has to be developed for what happens when domestic violence is identified. Some argue that if domestic violence issues are identified in a couple seeking to participate in a healthy marriage program, the healthy marriage program should not enroll the couple. If the couple is already in the program when domestic violence is identified, the couple should be dropped. Others

argue that if services are denied to the couple, then they are left with no help, and the violence may become worse. Similar issues can arise for responsible fatherhood programs that identify domestic violence issues for the men they are serving.

There is no one right answer or “one size fits all” approach to these issues. They have to be talked through by those in each community working together to determine what will work best for the population they are serving.

Regular Consultation.

It is quite possible that, after initial consultation, new issues will arise. It is also possible that identified solutions to the issues raised above will not work out as planned. Regular, planned, and scheduled communication will help identify problems early on and make sure they are addressed. Initial collaboration is important; ongoing follow-up is essential. There should be a commitment to periodic meetings. They could be weekly, monthly, or quarterly, depending on local conditions. The important thing is that all the programs know there is an ongoing commitment to work-

ing together and to resolving problems as they arise.

Conclusion

While federal law may require collaboration between healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood, and domestic violence programs, this will not be an easy task. Each program has its own identity and mission. In many communities, there is a good deal of mutual suspicion among the three fields. Each “owns” its clients and may be reluctant to have them participate in another’s program. Stereotypes reinforce this mutual distrust.

However, it is clear that families are best served by holistic, integrated approaches. Couples and their children may need services from a variety of sources in order to achieve a stable, safe family life. Programs that can work together will be able to provide the most appropriate and helpful services. Collaboration can begin around the issues described above. Such collaboration must be ongoing, respectful, and adaptable. Those who can build bridges between the fields will be doing a great service to families.

Endnotes

- 1 See Section 7103 of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. For more details on the legislation see Paula Roberts *The Marriage and Fatherhood Provisions of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 with a FY 2007 Budget Update* (February 2006) available at www.clasp.org
- 2 For information on collaborations between Responsible Fatherhood and Domestic Violence programs see, Marguerite Roulet, *Fatherhood Programs and Domestic Violence* (2003), available from the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy (CFFPP) at www.cffpp.org
- 3 Those who would like more information about the Wingspread Conference itself can look for an upcoming Conference Report on the CLASP website www.clasp.org
- 4 Much more about the domestic violence community and its work can be found on the web site of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence www.nrcdv.org
- 5 See Michael Johnson, *A Sociologists Perspective on Domestic Violence* (2006), a paper prepared for the Wingspread Building Bridges Conference and available at www.clasp.org.
- 6 For a further discussion of these issues, particularly in the Latino/Latina community, see Julia Perilla, *A Community Psychologist's Perspective on Domestic Violence* (2006), a paper prepared for the Wingspread Building Bridges Conference available at www.clasp.org
- 7 One good source of information is the Women of Color Network www.vawnet.org
- 8 Other excellent resources include the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, www.dvinstute.org; National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, www.dvalianza.org; Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, www.apiahf.org/apadvinstute
- 9 For a more detailed description of this movement and its academic basis see William Doherty, Edward Kouneski, and Martha Erickson, *Responsible Fathering: An Overview and Conceptual Framework*, *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (May 1998), pp. 277-292.
- 10 Examples of these types of organizations include the National Center for Fathering, www.fathers.com and the National Fatherhood Initiative, www.fatherhood.com
- 11 Examples of organizations with this focus include the Center for Family Policy and Practice, www.cffpp.org
- 12 More information about Parent's Fair Share and its results can be found at www.mdrc.org
- 13 More detailed information about the Healthy Marriage Movement can be found at the web site for the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center www.healthy-marriageinfo.org
- 14 Theodora Ooms, *The New Kid on the Block: What is Marriage Education and How Does It Work?* available at www.clasp.org
- 15 For a brief description of these projects, see www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/funding/child_support.html
- 16 For more on these activities see www.acf.hhs.gov/healthy-marriage/funding/index
- 17 Federal guidance on what is allowable in this area can be found in TANF-ACF-IM-2004-02 available at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/im2004-02
- 18 For example, see Marlene Pearson, *Love U2: Getting Smarter About Relationships, Sex, Babies and Marriage*, a four-unit comprehensive relationship education curriculum for teens.
- 19 Scott Stanley, *Testimony on Healthy Marriage* before the Committee on Finance, Subcommittee on Social Security and Family Policy, United States Senate, Washington, DC (May 5, 2004).
- 20 More on these efforts can be found at www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage
- 21 Mary Parke, *Are Married Parents Really Better for Children?* Available at www.clasp.org
- 22 A. Mahoney and N. Tarakeshwar, "Religion's Role in Marital and Family Relationships". in R.F. Paloutzian & C.L. Parks, eds., *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion*, (2005) pp.177-198.
- 23 For example, The Family Violence Prevention Fund has produced curriculum guidelines and tools for fathering after domestic violence has occurred. Ann Fleck-Henderson and Juan Carlos Arean, *Breaking the Cycle* (2004). For more information contact www.endabuse.org.

Couples and Marriage Series

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ABOUT CLASP

The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national non-profit that works to improve the lives of low-income people. CLASP's mission is to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth and to secure equal justice for all.

The Couples and Marriage Policy Brief series seeks to inform the debate about public policies to strengthen and stabilize two-parent families and marriage. The series focuses on the effects on child well-being, with a special interest in couple relationships and marriage in low-income communities.

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