



**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER
FOR FOSTER CARE
& PERMANENCY PLANNING**

at the Hunter College
School of Social Work

INFORMATION PACKET: *Marriage Initiatives*

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INFORMATION PACKET

Marriage Initiatives

Prepared by Kristine Schuerger, M.S.W Intern, NRCFCPP

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, also known as welfare reform, outlined four specific goals. Three of these four goals refer to marriage promotion and family formation. Specifically, under PRWORA, states have been directed to promote “job preparation, work and marriage,” to “prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies,” and to “encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.”

In February 2002, The Bush administration announced plans to allocate \$300 million for demonstration projects to “promote healthy marriages.” As Congress contemplates reauthorization of the 1996 welfare legislation this year, marriage promotion has become a central issue in the Bush administration’s plan. According to the Bush administration’s proposal, “There is an abundant body of research proving that children raised in households headed by continuously married parents fare, on average, better than children growing up in any other family structure” ([Working Toward Independence](#), p.19). Thus, along with Faith-Based Initiatives and Fatherhood Initiatives, a strong emphasis has been placed on family formation and marriage in contemplating reauthorization.

According to research by Theodora Ooms, “Children living with single mothers are five times more likely to be poor as those in two-parent families. Growing up in a single-parent family also roughly doubles the risk that a child will drop out of school, have difficulty finding a job, or become a teen parent. About half of these effects appear to be attributable to the reduced income available to single parents, but the other half is due to noneconomic factors” ([Marriage Plus](#)). Supporters of marriage initiatives view such findings as a clear indication of the necessity to promote marriage in order to end dependency, strengthen families and to enhance the well being of children.

The involvement and investment of government in marriage promotion has not been without debate, however. Many who oppose marriage initiatives view them as reproachful of single-mothers and as indifferent toward children who remain in single-parent families. Moreover, it is argued that many mothers are single for good reasons. For example, many single-mothers have left abusive marriages and choose not to remarry. Primarily, those in opposition of marriage initiatives hold that marriage is a private, personal matter, outside the scope of government intervention.

Given the focus on marriage initiatives as Congress considers welfare reform reauthorization, it is imperative that providers and consumers be knowledgeable of relevant issues, policies and ideologies. Contained in this Marriage Initiatives Information Packet is a fact sheet with statistics, a review of policies and legislation, references and suggested readings and a list of web resources.

Marriage Initiatives

Fact Sheet

*[taken from [THE URBAN INSTITUTE](#)]

ECONOMIC GAINS FROM MARRIAGE

Deploying government funds to encourage marriage has sparked heated debate. According to proponents, informing people of marriage's long-term benefits, encouraging them to marry, and providing relationship tools will reduce poverty and family instability. According to critics, marriage promotion oversteps government's bounds, could divert TANF funds to nonwelfare programs, and detracts attention from a more pressing problem—early childbearing. Critics also question whether poor women will see economic gains and whether policy-induced marriages might increase domestic violence among financially strapped couples.

- ✓ Married-couple families with children have much higher living standards and are less poor than other families. Although this observation tells us little about poverty's causes, research shows that additional marriages would likely reduce poverty, especially among low-income women. As shown in two recent simulation studies, marriages among unwed parents could reduce child poverty by as much as 25 percent (Lerman 1996; Thomas and Sawhill 2001). Among unwed mothers, marriage's positive effect on poverty rates appears greater among women at higher risk of being poor than among women at lower risk of being poor (Lichter, Graefe, and Brown 2001).
- ✓ Marriage appears to benefit cohabiting-couple households as well as single parents. Even among lower-income families, married parents with children have a higher standard of living than single parents or cohabiting couples (see figure). Not surprisingly, children in married-couple families are less likely to face material hardship (such as inadequate food) than children in single-parent families. However, children in cohabiting-couple households also suffer more material hardship than children in married-parent families, despite the presence of two potential earners. Among couples with the same earning capacity, the economic advantages of marriage over cohabiting remain significant (Lerman 2001).
- ✓ These research findings make marriage promotion programs worth investigating. They also make policies *discouraging* marriage hard to justify. Often, benefit programs indirectly reduce or eliminate marriage's economic benefits. Among poor nonmarital families who wed, "marriage penalties" can arise because the couple's combined income causes benefits to phase out at a faster rate. Congress has taken initial steps to solve this problem. In , for example, it changed the income caps for the earned income tax credit (EITC); the credit now phases out at a higher income level for married couples than for single parents.
- ✓ But significant disincentives remain: Consider an unmarried mother with two children earning \$13,000 annually who lives with a man earning \$13,000 per year. Through the couple's marriage, the family loses about \$3,000 in EITC and

food stamp benefits. Although marriage sometimes increases a family's benefits, among low-income couples marriage penalties are more common.

- ✓ Greater progress in eliminating marriage penalties would send a consistent, positive message to couples. Though the impact of such changes is uncertain, one recent experiment found that changing income support programs to offer better marriage incentives reduced divorce and increased marriage (Miller et al. 2000). Such measures, however, can be costly and are less transparent to the public than programs directly promoting marriage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By most measures, marriage helps keep children out of poverty. If government-funded initiatives could promote healthy marriages, child poverty would almost certainly decline. But it's not clear that the proposed programs will prompt more couples to wed, and if they do, whether the resulting marriages will be stable. Marriage preparation services, in particular, appear promising, and public awareness campaigns discouraging teen pregnancy and encouraging father involvement in child rearing are common. Nevertheless, without more evidence, committing up to \$1.5 billion over five years to these programs is risky. In reviewing marriage-promotion strategies, Congress and the administration should consider:

- *Requiring states to target TANF funds used for marriage promotion programs to low-income individuals.* Reaching a broad audience through public announcements and marriage education may be a larger state goal. But TANF funds should primarily support relationship counseling, message campaigns, and divorce prevention programs in predominantly low-income neighborhoods and schools.
- *Supporting a range of strategies that integrate marriage initiatives into well-established, family-related initiatives.* Comprehensive programs that link marriage promotion and education to teenpregnancy prevention, family planning, and career-preparation activities would support the broader goal of family stability. Making marriage promotion part of a multipronged strategy would also reduce the risk of encouraging unstable marriages.
- *Planning an overall strategy and designing well-defined, targeted projects that assess which approaches best promote stable, healthy marriages.* Requiring that all funds allocated to marriage initiatives include a research or evaluation component will help build benchmarking data. Compared with the Bush-sponsored proposal, this approach would entail less government spending in the first two years, followed by a larger commitment of funds in three to five years.

Marriage Initiatives

Review of Policy & Legislation

*[Taken from [Care 2000](#)]

Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996

This legislation, also known as PRWORA and “welfare reform,” replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the cash assistance portion of welfare. TANF gives block grants to states. This means that the federal government gives a set amount of money to the states, along with a set of guidelines, including time-limits, work requirements, and child support laws. TANF has set goals that are written into the legislation, and states may use their block grant money to fund programs that attempt to achieve these goals. States now have much more freedom to set their own requirements and benefit levels than under AFDC.

Funding for welfare reform will expire in 2002. At this time, Congress will have to reauthorize, or vote upon, this legislation. Congress is presently holding hearings and testimonies to establish how successful welfare reform has been, whether it should continue in its current form, and determine funding levels.

*While welfare reform appears to focus on work opportunities and job training, the legislation begins by saying, “**Marriage is the foundation of a successful society**” (H.R. 3734, sec. 101(1), 104th Congress). Thus the 1996 welfare legislation has several key issues pertaining to family formation and reproductive choice.*

Goals of Welfare Reform

- “1. Provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
2. End the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work and **marriage**;
3. Prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of these pregnancies;
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.”

(H.R. 3734, sec. 101(1), 104th Congress)

*Attempts to achieve these goals are made through specific programs such as the illegitimacy bonus, family caps, abstinence-only education, family planning, **marriage initiatives**, and minor parent provisions.*

Summaries of **marriage** and **family formation** initiatives:

**[Taken from NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund]*

Rewarding States with Two-Parent Families

Starting in 2002 as part of the 1996 welfare reform law, a \$20 million “family formation” measure will award the 10 states with the largest increase in children below 200 percent of the federal poverty level who reside in married , two-parent families.

Proposed Federal Marriage Initiatives

The Bush Administration has proposed spending \$100 million annually from the TANF budget to fund experimental marriage promotion programs in selected states. As much as another \$200 million also would be spent on marriage promotion initiatives.

Three bills pending in Congress would fund fatherhood programs to help fathers and their families avoid or leave cash welfare by providing employment services. All of the bills would require participating programs to promote marriage through marriage counseling, education, divorce reduction and other similar services. The bills are the Responsible Fatherhood Act of 2001, The Strengthening Working Families Act of 2001 and the Child Support Distribution Act of 2001.

[In addition, the TANF Reauthorization Act of 2001 (also known as the Mink Bill) is being considered by Congress.]

State Marriage Initiatives: As a result of PRWORA, some states have begun using TANF funds to experiment with marriage initiatives. These states include: Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Michigan, Oklahoma, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin.

Marriage Initiatives
References and Suggested Readings

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*Also see: The Institute for Women's Policy research - [Marriage and Poverty: An Annotated Bibliography](#)

This annotated bibliography is designed to provide researchers, policymakers, advocates, and the general public with an overview of the debate and research surrounding the promotion of marriage as a solution to reducing poverty. In addition to newspaper articles familiarizing the reader with the current debate, topics covered in this bibliography include: economic insecurity and single motherhood, child welfare and single motherhood, factors that influence marital decisions, race and family formation, the conservative and feminist perspectives, and current policy proposals. Articles are listed alphabetically by author within each category. This bibliography was written with the generous support of the Ms. Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

Electronic Resources (taken from [Welfare Information Network](#))

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See <http://www.welfareinfo.org/include/fp-famformation.htm> for more publications available for download.

*Also visit the [Welfare Reform Research Database](#) of the Institute for Poverty Research. The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) is a national, university-based center for research into the causes and consequences of poverty and social inequality in the United States. It is nonprofit and nonpartisan.

Marriage Initiatives
Web Resources

Research Organizations:

[American Public Human Services Association](#)

Founded in 1930, APHSA is a nonprofit, bipartisan organization of individuals and agencies concerned with human services. Our members include all state and many territorial human service agencies, more than 1,200 local agencies, and several thousand individuals who work in or otherwise have an interest in human service programs. APHSA educates members of Congress, the media, and the broader public on what is happening in the states around welfare, child welfare, health care reform, and other issues involving families and the elderly.

[CONTACT] → visit APHSA's [State Human Service Agency Info and Links Guide](#)

[The Heritage Foundation](#)

Founded in 1973, The Heritage Foundation is a research and educational institute - a think tank - whose mission is to formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense.

See: [Heritage's Welfare and Marriage Briefing Room](#)

[CONTACT]

[The Brookings Institution](#)

In its research, The Brookings Institution functions as an independent analyst and critic, committed to [publishing](#) its findings for the information of the public. In its [conferences](#) and activities, it serves as a bridge between scholarship and public policy, bringing new knowledge to the attention of decision makers and affording scholars a better insight into public policy issues.

See: [Welfare Marriage Plan Isn't the Problem](#)

[CONTACT]

[Center for Law and Social Policy](#)

CLASP is a national non-profit organization with expertise in both law and policy affecting the poor. Through education, policy research and advocacy, CLASP seeks to improve the economic security of low-income families with children and secure access for low-income persons to our civil justice system.

See report: [Spending Too Much, Accomplishing Too Little: An Analysis of the Family Formation Provisions of H.R. 4737 and Recommendations for Change](#)

[CONTACT]

[Joint Center for Poverty Research](#)

The Northwestern University / University of Chicago Joint Center for Poverty Research supports academic research that examines what it means to be poor and live in America. JCPR concentrates on the causes and consequences of poverty in America and the effectiveness of policies aimed at reducing poverty. Our goal is to advance what is known about the economic, social and behavioral factors that cause poverty, and to establish the actual effects of interventions designed to alleviate poverty. The Center's research agenda focuses on: changing labor markets and the causes of inequality in the current labor

market; family functioning and the well-being of children; the impact of concentrated urban poverty; and the effects in these domains - and others - of changing policy and new programs.

See [JCPR's Publications page](#) for multiple resources on topics of welfare reform, marriage and family.

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.](#)

Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., is known for its high-quality, objective research to support decisions about our nation's most pressing social policy problems. The firm has conducted some of the most important studies of health care, welfare, education, employment, nutrition, and early childhood policies and programs in the United States. Its research, which crisscrosses the human life span from children's health and welfare to long-term care for elderly people, provides a sound foundation for decisions that affect the well-being of Americans.

See [Strengthening Low-Income Families](#) web page

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Institute for Public Accuracy](#)

As a nationwide consortium of policy researchers, the Institute for Public Accuracy seeks to broaden public discourse by gaining media access for those whose perspectives are commonly drowned out by corporate-backed think tanks and other influential institutions. With systematic outreach to mass media, the Institute promotes the inclusion of outlooks that usually get short shrift. The Institute's news releases provide well-documented analysis that is pegged on fast-breaking events while focusing on fundamental issues.

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[The Cato Institute](#)

The Cato Institute seeks to broaden the parameters of public policy debate to allow consideration of the traditional American principles of limited government, individual liberty, free markets and peace. Toward that goal, the Institute strives to achieve greater involvement of the intelligent, concerned lay public in questions of policy and the proper role of government.

See: [Is the President's Marriage Proposal DOA?](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Center on Fathers, Families and Public Policy](#)

The mission of the Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy (CFFPP) is to help create a society in which low-income parents - mothers as well as fathers - are in a position to support their children emotionally, financially, and physically. CFFPP seeks to address the unique barriers affecting low-income fathers, including negative public perceptions. Through the provision of technical assistance, policy research, and public education, CFFPP will work to support low-income fathers and their families and develop public awareness of their needs.

See [The Legislative Marriage Agenda and its Potential Meaning for Programs Serving Low-Income Families](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[The Urban Institute](#)

The Urban Institute is a nonprofit nonpartisan policy research and educational organization established to examine the social, economic, and governance problems facing the nation. It provides information and analysis to public and private decision makers to help them address these challenges and strives to raise citizen understanding of these issues and tradeoffs in policy making.

See: [Should Government Promote Healthy Marriages?](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Child Welfare Institute](#)

Our mission is to provide information, ideas and guidance in the field of child welfare training and organizational development consultation. Since 1984 CWI has been putting ideas into action to help our client agencies succeed. Our focus is on practice, and creating effective solutions that achieve measurable goals.

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Community and Rural Development Institute of Cornell University](#)

CaRDI works to strengthen and support New York's local communities and citizens. CaRDI provides outreach to community leaders, educators, elected officials and citizens interested in the vitality of their communities.

See: [Publications page](#) for information on marriage initiatives and welfare reform specific to rural communities.

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Well-Being](#)

The Center for Research on Child Wellbeing conducts research on children's health, education, income, and family structure. Our faculty is made up of economists, sociologists, demographers, and political scientists at Princeton as well as researchers at other universities and institutions.

See: [For Richer or Poorer?](#)

See also: [The Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

The Foundation makes grants, funds demonstrations, provides services, delivers technical assistance and disseminates data and analyses -- all aimed at helping states, cities, and neighborhoods do a better, more cost-effective job of supporting children and families. Our investments in each of these areas are evaluated against clear goals and measured by results, performance outcomes, and return on investment. This website strives to provide the best available data and analysis on critical issues affecting struggling families and at-risk kids. It is intended to be dynamic, with new information and products continually placed online. We encourage frequent exploration of our site, and invite comments and discussion from all users.

See: [2000 Kids Count Databook](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

National Organizations:

**The following organizations generally support Marriage Initiatives.*

[Alliance for Marriage](#)

The Alliance for Marriage (AFM) is a 501(c)(3) non-partisan research and education organization dedicated to promoting marriage and addressing the epidemic of fatherless families in the United States. AFM exists to educate the public, the media, elected officials, and civil society leaders on the benefits of marriage for children, adults and society. AFM also exists to promote reforms designed to strengthen the institution of marriage and restore a culture of married fatherhood in American society.

See: [Marriage Amendment](#) page

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Campaign for Working Families](#)

The CWF is a non-partisan political action committee (PAC) dedicated to electing pro-family, pro-life and pro-free enterprise candidates to federal and state offices.

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Concerned Women for America](#)

The **vision** of CWA is for women and like-minded men, from all walks of life, to come together and restore the family to its traditional purpose and thereby allow each member of the family to realize their God-given potential and be more responsible citizens.

See: [Welfare Reform/Marriage](#) search results

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[The Empowerment Network](#)

The Empowerment Network (TEN) is a resource hub for state legislators, grassroots organizations, and other civic leaders promoting American family and community renewal of civil society in the 21st century.

See: [TEN's Policy Platform](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Focus on Family](#)

Focus on the Family began in 1977 in response to Dr. James Dobson's increasing concern for the American family. A Ph.D. in child development (University of Southern California), he had served 14 years as associate clinical professor of pediatrics at the USC School of Medicine and a concurrent 17 years on the attending staff of Los Angeles Children's Hospital in the divisions of Child Development and Medical Genetics. What he had seen included massive internal and external pressures on American households, causing unprecedented disintegration. Yet there seemed to be no comprehensive, rational and biblically based conception of the family for those in greatest need.

See: [Hot Topics: Marriage](#) page

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[National Marriage Project](#)

The mission of the National Marriage Project is to strengthen the institution of marriage by providing research and analysis that informs public policy, educates the American public, and focuses attention on a problem of enormous scope and consequence. Simply stated, the problem is this: marriage is declining as an institution for childbearing and child rearing, with devastating consequences for millions of children.

See: [Publications page](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[National Fatherhood Initiative](#)

NFI encourages and supports family and father-friendly policies, develops national public education campaigns to highlight the importance of fathers in the lives of their children, provides motivation for national and local coalition-building, and provides information to individual men to help them be better fathers.

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Michigan Family Forum](#)

Michigan Family Forum (MFF) is a private, non-profit, research and education organization based in Lansing, Michigan, just blocks from the State Capitol.

See: [Articles](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Oklahoma Family Policy Council](#)

Founded in 1989, the Oklahoma Family Policy Council (OFPC) is a statewide nonpartisan, nonprofit research, education and communications organization. **OFPC exists:** to strengthen families, to educate Oklahomans on public policy as it impacts the family, to encourage responsible citizenship, and to restore traditional, Judeo-Christian principles in American public policy.

See: [Marriage Initiatives page](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

**The following organizations generally oppose Marriage Initiatives:*

[Alliance for Children and Families](#)

The Alliance for Children and Families is an international membership association representing more than 350 private, nonprofit child- and family-serving organizations. Alliance members serve more than 5 million individuals annually in more than 2,000 communities, providing a vast array of services ranging from residential care to domestic abuse prevention and intervention. The Alliance's mission is to strengthen members' capacity to serve and advocate for children, families, and communities. The Alliance formed in October 1998 when Family Service America (established 1911) and the National Association of Homes and Services for Children (established 1975) merged.

See: [Fact Sheet: Welfare Reform and Family Economic Viability](#)

See also: [Position Statement on Welfare Reauthorization](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Alternatives to Marriage Project](#)

The Alternatives to Marriage Project (ATMP) advocates for equality and fairness for unmarried people, including people who choose not to marry, cannot marry, or live together before marriage. We provide support and information for this fast-growing constituency, fight discrimination on the basis of marital status, and educate the public and policymakers about relevant social and economic issues. We believe that marriage is only one of many acceptable family forms, and that society should recognize and support healthy relationships in all their diversity. ATMP is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Visit ATM's [Library](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Americans for Democratic Action](#)

ADA is the nation's oldest independent liberal political organization, dedicated to individual liberty and building economic and social justice at home and abroad. Since 1947, we have led public opinion and coalitions by taking early, principled stands on a broad range of domestic, foreign, economic, military, social and environmental issues.

See: [Welfare reform Issue Page](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[American Prospect Online](#)

The aim of The American Prospect is to contribute to a renewal of America's democratic traditions by presenting a practical and convincing vision of liberal philosophy, politics, and public life. We publish articles for the general reader that attempt to break through conventional understanding and creatively reframe public questions. Ours is not a magazine of complaint, of angry gestures, or of private irritations. It is a magazine of public ideas, firmly committed -- however unfashionably -- to a belief in public improvement. America can do much good, and it can do much better.

See: [Reforming Welfare Reform: An Introduction](#)

See Also: [A Marriage and Family Breakdown](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Council on Contemporary Families](#)

Founded in 1996, with a membership consisting of national noted family researchers, mental health and social work practitioners, and clinicians, The Council on Contemporary Families (CCF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the national conversation about what contemporary families need and how these needs can best be met. We believe that the public wants more accurate information about the condition of America's families and is looking for a more humane and sensitive discussion of the larger social, legal, cultural, and psychological issues that are often simplified under the rubric of "family values." We seek to meet this need through the dissemination of educational materials, media coverage, conferences, and seminars.

See: [Discussion Paper: A \(Marriage\) Proposal to End Poverty](#)

Also see: [Family Fact Sheets](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[National Association of Social Workers](#)

The NASW is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the world, with more than 150,000 members. NASW works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies.

See: [Welfare Reauthorization](#) pages

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[National Gay and Lesbian Task Force](#)

NGLTF is the national progressive organization working for the civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people, with the vision and commitment to building a powerful political movement.

Visit [NGLTF's Policy Institute](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[National Organization for Women/ NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund](#)

Since 1970, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund continues to be at the center of every major social and economic justice concern on the women's rights agenda, defining the issues and bringing them to public attention. NOW Legal Defense pursues equality for women and girls in the workplace, the schools, the family and the courts, through litigation, education, and public information programs.

See: [Welfare & Poverty Issue Briefs](#)

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

[Unitarian Universalist Association](#)

The UUA grew out of the consolidation, in 1961, of two religious denominations: the Universalists, organized in 1793, and the Unitarians, organized in 1825. The UUA provides resources and offers consultations to local congregations, creates religious education curricula, spurs social action efforts, expedites the settlement of professional religious leaders, supports Beacon Press, and produces pamphlets, devotional material, and the bimonthly journal, *UU World*. The UUA works in concert with many organizations to provide a wide range of services.

See: [TANF/Marriage Promotion](#) page

[\[CONTACT\]](#)

Other Related Sites:

- [Abstinence Clearinghouse](#)
- [SmartMarriages.com](#)
- [American Association for Single People](#)
- [Wedded Bliss Foundation \(africana.com\)](#)
- [Welfare Reform Academy](#)
- [Welfare Information Network](#)

Federal Government Sites:

[The White House](#)

See Report: [Working Toward Independence](#) for summary of Bush Administration's plan to "promote child well-being and healthy marriages."

See also: [Fact Sheet: Reforming Welfare to Increase Independence & Strengthen Families](#)

[Department of Health and Human Services](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is the federal agency that oversees the comprehensive bipartisan welfare reform plan created by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). Enacted by Congress and signed into law in August 1996, PRWORA dramatically changed the nation's welfare system into one that requires work in exchange for time-limited assistance. PRWORA contains strong work requirements combined with supports for families moving from welfare to work, including increased funding for child care and continued eligibility for medical coverage. It also provides a performance bonus to reward states for achieving PRWORA's goals, state maintenance of effort requirements and comprehensive child support enforcement provisions.

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITY

Ending dependence and promoting two-parent families. Flexibility under PRWORA extends to providing services to non-custodial parents to ensure that they are able to support their children and have the skills necessary to be better parents. All states have the administrative flexibility to use TANF funding for programs that strengthen and encourage two-parent families. In addition, PRWORA includes grants to help states establish programs that support and facilitate non-custodial parents' visitation with and access to their children.

Teen pregnancy prevention. PRWORA provides \$50 million a year in funding for abstinence education activities. This program provides states with grants to support a wide range of innovative abstinence programs for adolescents.

Encouraging healthy marriages and two-parent married families. The President's plan directs up to \$300 million for programs that encourage healthy, stable marriages. These programs include premarital education and counseling, as well as research and technical assistance.

Other government sites with information on marriage promotion:

- [Family Formation Pages](#) of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
- [Administration for Children and Families \(ACF\)](#)
 - [ACF Office of State Systems](#)
 - [Child Care Bureau](#)
 - [Children's Bureau](#)
 - [Family and Youth Services Bureau](#)
 - [National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

- [National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth](#)
- [Office of Child Support Enforcement \(OCSE\)](#)
- [Office of Family Assistance](#)
- [U.S. Census Bureau](#)
- [Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics](#)
- [House Ways and Means Committee](#)
- <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/marriage.htm>