

An Overview of Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Curricula

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Overview

Healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programming—also called marriage and relationship education or relationship education programming—teaches concepts and skills that promote healthy, safe, and stable relationships among youth and adults.¹ When designing and implementing an HMRE program, one of the most important decisions that program providers must make is to choose which curriculum to implement. For example, organizations can use curricula developed by external developers that come with predetermined content, materials, and activities, or they may develop their own curriculum. With either approach, organizations need to consider many factors when assessing whether a specific curriculum is appropriate for a given program: For example, does the curriculum content align with the goal of that program, and is it designed for the program's target population?

To help HMRE program providers (and the evaluators who work with them) better understand and assess various aspects of HMRE curricula, this brief provides an overview of the design of HMRE curricula implemented in programs that have been formally evaluated.^a Synthesizing information from 21 HMRE curricula, the brief describes the target population(s) for which each curriculum is designed, the HMRE-related topics it addresses, any specific curriculum adaptations available (e.g., is it available in Spanish?), how the curriculum is delivered (activities), the recommended dosage of the curriculum, and whether facilitator training is needed implement the



MAST CENTER RESEARCH

The Marriage Strengthening Research and Dissemination Center (MAST Center) conducts research on marriage and romantic relationships in the U.S. and healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs designed to strengthen these relationships. This research aims to identify critical research gaps, generate new knowledge, and help programs more effectively serve the individuals and families they work with. MAST Center research is concentrated in two areas:

- **Relationship Patterns & Trends.** Population-based research to better understand trends, predictors, dynamics, and outcomes of marriage and relationships in the United States.
- **Program Implementation & Evaluation.** Research that helps build knowledge about what works in HMRE programming, for whom, and in what context.

^a We limit our review to curricula that have been used in HMRE programs that have been formally evaluated in terms of how they were implemented (implementation or process evaluation) or their effects on participant outcomes (outcome evaluation). However, the current brief focuses on the *design* of HMRE curricula rather than on the *implementation* of these curricula in practice or on their *effectiveness* in achieving a program's desired outcomes.

curriculum. The brief also discusses implications for future research and practice to improve the design and implementation of HMRE curricula. Appendix A provides a more detailed summary of

each curriculum. An HMRE Curriculum Assessment Tool has also been developed to further assist program staff in selecting appropriate curricula.

Key Findings

- The HMRE curricula included in this review were most commonly designed for married and/or unmarried adult couples or adult individuals.
- Many HMRE curricula have been adapted for use with particular sub-populations targeted and served by HMRE programs—for example, low-income couples or individuals in the military. However, relatively few of the curricula reviewed were initially designed for these populations.
- The topics included in specific HMRE curricula often align with the unique needs of their target populations, but most address conflict management and communication.
- Establishing consistent and research-based core components (topics and activities) could improve HMRE curriculum delivery and facilitate replication in different settings and with different populations.
- Some curricula offer training to facilitators, and some require that facilitators be certified before delivering the curriculum. Incorporating more such formal staff training and assessing the quality of these trainings could improve overall delivery of HMRE curricula.

Methods

For this brief, the research team first identified HMRE implementation and program evaluation studies conducted in the United States, written in English, and published between 2008 and 2019. We searched multiple research databases using the search terms “healthy marriage and relationship education,” “couple relationship education,” “marriage education,” and “relationship education.” In addition, we reviewed the bibliographies of select articles and relevant websites to identify additional studies for inclusion. This review identified a total of 127 HMRE program implementation- and evaluation-related publications.

To capture more commonly used curricula, we focused on curricula that were implemented in at least two programs with published implementation or outcome evaluation studies. Based on these criteria, we identified 21 distinct curricula evaluated in 93 of the 127 reviewed publications. We obtained detailed information on each curriculum from the reviewed studies when available, combined with a scan of curriculum websites. If additional information was needed, we ordered complete curriculum manuals and materials and/or facilitator training materials, and consulted directly with curriculum developers when full manuals were not available.

All curricula were reviewed and coded using a standard coding scheme that consisted of the following fields:

- **Target population:** Information about whom a curriculum is designed for and/or receives the curriculum
- **Topics:** HMRE-related content covered in a curriculum
- **Adaptations available:** Information about ways in which a curriculum has been modified for use with specific populations other than the original target population or in different settings than originally designed
- **Activities:** Information about ways in which curriculum material is delivered
- **Dosage:** Information about the number of hours of curriculum material and/or the frequency of sessions
- **Staff training options and requirements:** Information regarding training requirements that familiarize facilitators with curriculum material to prepare them for delivering the curriculum

Appendix A provides a detailed summary of the 21 curricula.

HMRE Target Populations

HMRE curricula are designed for a variety of target populations. The curricula we reviewed were designed to explicitly serve (a) adult couples, singles, or both; (b) specific sub-populations of adults defined by characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, or parental status; and (c) youth. Often, a particular curriculum focused on more than one target population (see Table 1).

The HMRE curricula reviewed were primarily developed for use with adult couples and adult individuals. Some curricula designed for use with adult couples specify that they target married couples (5 curricula) and/or unmarried couples (5), while others do not specify relationship status beyond “couples.” Three curricula were developed specifically for use with low-income couples.

Of the 21 curricula reviewed, two were designed for Black couples (*Exploring Relationships* and *Marriage with Fragile Families*; *Basic Training for Couples*). No other curricula specified that they had been developed for use with a specific racial or ethnic population.

Additional curricula included in this review were designed specifically for use with adult individuals: *PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge) a Partner* was developed for use with individuals who are not in a relationship (i.e., single), and *Within My Reach* was designed for use with individuals who may or may not be in a relationship, but who participate without a partner. Individuals can participate in *OurRelationship* alone or as a couple (as long as they are in some type of current relationship).

A subset of adult-serving curricula was explicitly designed for parents and/or expectant parents. Several HMRE curricula were designed for use with parents, including couples expecting their first child (*Becoming Parents Program*), unmarried couples with a child in common (*Love’s Cradle*) or expecting a child (*Loving Couples, Loving Children*), and stepfamilies (*Smart Steps* or *Stepfamilies*).

21 HMRE curricula reviewed

- Active Relationships
- Basic Training for Couples
- Becoming Parents Program (BPP)
- Connections: Dating and Emotions
- Connections: Relationships and Marriage
- Couple Communication
- Exploring Relationships & Marriage with Fragile Families
- Hold Me Tight
- Love Notes 3.0
- Love’s Cradle
- Loving Couples, Loving Children
- Mastering the Mysteries of Love
- OurRelationship
- PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge) a Partner
- Prepare/Enrich Relationships Assessment
- PREP (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program)
- Relationship Smarts PLUS
- SmartSteps for Stepfamilies
- Together We Can
- Within My Reach
- Within Our Reach

Five HMRE curricula were explicitly designed for use with youth. Within this group of youth-focused curricula, the target age ranges vary. For example, *Relationship Smarts PLUS 4.0* is most often used with adolescents ages 12 to 16, and *Love Notes 3.0* is most often implemented with individuals ages 14 to 25. One curriculum, *PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge) a Partner*, specifies that it can be used with single individuals of any age, from adolescents in middle school through the elderly.

Topics Covered in HMRE Curricula

Most HMRE curricula address conflict management and communication. Other topics that are important for healthy relationships but less commonly addressed in HMRE curricula include intimacy and friendships; empathy; commitment; negotiation and compromise; self-care; finances; and roles, values, and beliefs.² A list of all topics included in at least two curricula reviewed here are listed in Table 2.^b

- The topics **most commonly addressed** in the curricula reviewed include conflict management and resolution (in 15 curricula) and communication skills (14).
- Additional topics that are **addressed less often but highlight other goals of some HMRE programming** include stress recognition and management (5 curricula), finances (5), emotional regulation (2), understanding one’s partner (2), and expectations and reality of relationships and marriage (2).

The topics included in specific curricula often align with the needs of their target populations.

For example, *PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge) a Partner*, a curriculum developed especially for singles, emphasizes how to ‘pace the development of a new relationship’ and ‘areas to pay attention to when getting to know a partner.’ Curricula designed for adolescents and young adults, such as *Relationship Smarts PLUS 4.0* and *Love Notes 3.0*, include content on planning for the future, dating violence, sex education, and the impact of technology (e.g., social media and sexting). The *Smart Steps for Stepfamilies* curriculum, aimed at building healthy relationships and stable stepfamilies, focuses on communication with both current *and* previous partners (as coparents) and parenting stepchildren in addition to shared children.

^b See Appendix A for complete lists of topics covered in each curriculum.

Table 1. Number of curricula designed for each target population

Population Targeted	Number of Curricula
Couples	
Married	5
Unmarried	5
Relationship status unspecified	4
Low-income	3
Black couples	2
Individual Adults	
Singles	4
Individuals in a relationship, but participating without their partner	3
Low-income individuals	1
Parents	
Expectant or new parents	2
Relationship status unspecified	2
Coparents (not in a romantic relationship)	1
Unmarried parents	1
Stepfamilies	1
Youth	
Adolescents or young adults	5

Note: The counts in the table do not sum to 21 because some curricula target multiple populations (e.g., unmarried, low-income couples).



Table 2. Topics addressed by HMRE curricula

Topic	Number of Curricula
Conflict management/resolution	15
Communication skills	14
Parenting/adjustment to parenthood	9
Self-awareness	7
Recognizing relationship danger/warning signs and destructive patterns	7
Commitment	7
Romance/keeping love alive	6
Developing healthy relationships	5
Intimacy	5
Stress recognition and management	5
Making decisions together	5
Finances	5
Goal setting	4
Problem solving	3
Forgiveness	3
Physical touch, sex, sexuality, consent, sexual values, and decision making	3
Trust	3
Teamwork	2
Infidelity	2
Technology/social media/sexting	2
Resilience	2
Emotion regulation	2
Understanding your partner	2
Expectations and reality of relationships and marriage	2

Note: A curriculum can cover more than one topic area.

The inclusion of specific topics in a curricula—as well as the strategies and materials used to deliver that content—is often research-based; that is, inclusion is informed by the broader scientific research on relationships.^{3,4,5} Many of the curricula reviewed here are informed by specific theories and/or scientific findings.

For example, *Hold Me Tight* is a streamlined version of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy (EFT), a short-term structured couples therapy approach that focuses on creating and strengthening the emotional bond between couples. EFT is theorized to create these secure bonds by helping partners recognize their emotions and learn to express them through positive, rather than negative, interactions.⁶

Another example is *Loving Couples, Loving Children*, which is informed by research indicating that relationship supportiveness, while relatively high at the time a couple's first child is born, decreases dramatically in the five years following their transition to parenthood.⁷ This was also the motivation for the development of a curriculum called *Bringing Home Baby* that was designed for expectant parents to mitigate declines in relationship supportiveness following the birth of a child. *Loving Couples, Loving Children* is similar to *Bringing Home Baby* but tailored to meet the needs of a low-income population.

The *Active Relationships* curricula center around a core set of skills, including communication

and conflict resolution skills, abuse prevention, mindfulness, and goal setting. The development of these skill sets was highly influenced by cognitive behavioral theory and research on positive

psychology, emotional intelligence, and marital stability (*Active Relationships* curricula developers, personal communication, December 16, 2019).

Adaptations to HMRE Curricula

Curricula are often designed for use with a particular population or for delivery in a certain format (e.g., in-person workshops). However, the original design may not be suitable for all populations or formats. As a result, developers and programs will often make adaptations to an existing curriculum so that it can serve a wider range of populations or be delivered in a different format. We found information regarding adaptations for approximately half of the curricula included in this review.

A culturally responsive adaptation tailors the original curriculum material to make it more relevant to the characteristics and needs of a specific population.⁸ **This review includes curricula that have been adapted to better serve Hispanic/Latino couples, military singles and couples, men who are incarcerated or re-entering society after incarceration, and even partners facing cardiac disease** (see Appendix A).^c These adaptations modify some curriculum activities and tailor them for the sub-populations of interest. For example, the *Becoming Parents Program* has a Hispanic/Latino version that builds on the original curriculum and incorporates values and norms of Hispanic/Latino culture. *Relationship Smarts PLUS* has a Sexual Risk Avoidance^d adaptation that adds material to the original curriculum to better meet the requirements for Sexual Risk Avoidance funding.

Many curricula have been translated into languages other than English for use with non-English-speaking populations. Of note, a translated curriculum may be identical to the English version and therefore not considered an adaptation. However, translation allows non-English-speaking populations who may benefit

from participation in an HMRE program the opportunity to do so. Nearly half of the curricula (n=9) have been translated into Spanish and a few have been translated into Mandarin and Korean. *Hold Me Tight* has been translated into 16 languages, making it available for use with many non-English-speaking populations.

Another way in which curricula have been adapted is for online delivery. For example, *Hold Me Tight* and *PREP* have been modified to be delivered online, making the curricula accessible to a larger audience. Participants complete these curricula independently, on their own schedules, and in the comfort of their own homes, which may eliminate common barriers to participation such as lack of transportation and conflicting work schedules.⁹

Some curricula provide explicit guidance on allowable and unallowable modifications. It is common for curricula to have core components, which are select topics, activities, or implementation approaches that are the most essential aspects of the curriculum.¹⁰ Allowable adaptations enable programs to alter elements of the curriculum that are not considered to be core.¹¹ For example, *Love Notes 3.0's Evidence Based Program Model (EBP)* adaptation includes add-on material, such as 1) activities for expecting and parenting teens; 2) icebreakers; 3) changes in the length, number, and frequency of sessions; and 4) make-up sessions. It does not, however, allow providers to implement the curriculum without using specific materials provided by the developer (e.g., PowerPoint slides, participant journals) or to skip any topics or activities from the core model.¹² In addition, facilitators must receive appropriate training to deliver this adaptation of the curriculum.

^c Not all adaptations described here were evaluated in the studies identified in this review.

^d The Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Program funds programs that teach youth how to voluntarily refrain from nonmarital sexual activity. For more information, see https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/fysb_srae_gd_factsheet_020819b.pdf

Activities: Delivery of HMRE Curricula

HMRE curricula use a mix of activities and modes of delivery, ranging from lectures and facilitator presentations to interactive and participatory activities at the group, couple, or family level. This section provides an overview of how curricula content is delivered, and the types of activities used.

The most commonly implemented activities are interactive activities, viewing of videos, and lectures (see Table 3). Most curricula reviewed include some type of interactive activity. These activities can be group-based or couple-based. Another common activity is watching videos. In *Loving Couples, Loving Children*, facilitators show a weekly video of a curriculum developer interviewing a low-income couple about the week's topic. These videos are intended to stimulate discussion among participants. One third of

curricula include a lecture component, and a few include homework activities, workbook activities, or PowerPoint presentations.

Table 3. Number of curricula with select activities

Activity	Number of Curricula
Interactive exercises or activities (e.g., discussion, role-play)	17
Video	9
Lecture	7
Homework activity	3
Workbook	2
PowerPoint presentation	2

Note: The counts in the table do not sum to 21 because many curricula implement multiple activities.

Dosage of HMRE Curricula

Dosage in the context of HMRE programs refers to the amount of time needed to implement the full curricula to cover all topics and activities. This can be defined in terms of total hours or total sessions. We were able to locate this information for 19 of the 21 reviewed curricula.

Implementation dosage varies widely across HMRE curricula, ranging from five 50-minute sessions (approximately 4 hours total) to 21 2-hour sessions (approximately 42 hours total) (see Table 4). The majority of curricula have a dosage of 24 hours or less.

Some HMRE curricula offer flexibility in terms of the number of hours needed to deliver the complete curriculum. For example, *Within My Reach* includes 16 units that are approximately two hours each. Programs can deliver these units

flexibly, using anywhere from one to all 16 units. Therefore, implementation can be as short as two total hours or as long as 32. A few curricula provide options for material to be delivered in short weeknight sessions for multiple weeks or in a fewer number of longer sessions on the weekend.

Table 4. Hours of curriculum content (n=21)

Dosage	Number of Curricula
<10 hours	4
12-15 hours	5
16-24 hours	4
25-39 hours	1
40+ hours	1
Flexible	4
Unknown	2

Staff Training and Training Resources

HMRE program facilitators need to be trained on the curriculum (topics, structure, and activities), engaging participants, and delivering the material with fidelity and quality (see definitions in box).

Information on facilitator training was available for 18 of the curricula included in this review.^e

^e *OurRelationship* does not use facilitators and therefore training is not applicable for this curriculum.

Fourteen curricula reviewed required some form of facilitator training, three had no training available, and one had an optional training available. Among those that do offer trainings, training generally lasts one to four days.

Detailed information on the content of the trainings was available for some curricula. For example, training for both *Connections* curricula include an overview of the curriculum, an in-depth examination of each lesson, hands-on use of the curriculum's essential teaching tools, and examples of the flexibility of curriculum implementation. *Exploring Relationships and Marriage with Fragile Families* offers a two-day training in which facilitators observe trainers implementing modules of the curriculum while staff role-play as couples. Facilitators then practice implementing a session in the same setting and receive feedback from the trainers.

Two curricula offer facilitator training in person and online. *PICK (Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge) a Partner* requires that facilitators be certified via in-person or online seminars. After attending one of these seminars, facilitators must pass an online certification test. Similarly, the developers of the *Prepare/Enrich*

Definitions

Fidelity refers to the degree to which all major elements of a curriculum or program are delivered as intended or designed.¹³

Quality is a measure of the skill or competence with which facilitators deliver the program and interact with participants.¹⁴

Relationships Assessment—an assessment of relationship satisfaction, relationship dynamics, commitment level, personality, spiritual beliefs, and family systems—offer both in-person and online trainings. During these trainings, individuals learn to administer the assessment, interpret results, give feedback, generate discussion, and facilitate relationship skill-building exercises.

Some curricula also offer resources to staff throughout implementation. In addition to requiring that facilitators obtain certification, *Love Notes 3.0 EBP*, for example, offers resources for program providers and their facilitators, including slide decks related to the key content of the curriculum, fidelity measures for coaches and evaluators, and measures of facilitator quality.

Implications for Research and Practice

Drawing from a sample of curricula that have been part of evaluation research conducted over the last decade, the findings in this brief show that curricula developed for use in HMRE programming vary widely in terms of their target populations, HMRE-related topics, available adaptations, and training approaches. Our findings also point to some continued research needs to further inform HMRE practice. Below, we provide recommendations for curriculum developers, HMRE program providers, and evaluators to improve future HMRE program design and implementation.

More curricula need to be developed and evaluated that are designed for understudied groups who may be the focus of HMRE programs, but for whom relevant, tailored, and research-based curricula are lacking.

The target audience for many curricula is couples, both married and unmarried. Some curricula have been modified to better meet the needs of specific populations, including low-income couples, individuals not currently in a relationship, and non-native English speakers. Despite these existing adaptations, however, few of the evaluated curricula were initially designed to specifically meet the needs of these populations. More culturally relevant, tailored, and research-based curricula are necessary to meet the needs of the wide range of HMRE program attendees.

One promising model comes from the Hispanic Healthy Marriage Initiative (HHMI), a federal initiative to support delivery of effective, culturally appropriate marriage and relationship education programs to Hispanic communities across the country.¹⁵ Through this initiative, the HHMI developed a series of supplemental curriculum

modules that can be used to enhance existing healthy marriage curricula and focus discussions on issues that are targeted and specific to the experiences of Hispanic couples and families. An implementation evaluation of programs funded by the HHMI demonstrated that several participating programs developed their own tailored curricula for Hispanic families;¹⁶ however, the effectiveness of these modules was not tested through a formal outcome evaluation.

Youth are an important target population for relationship education programs,¹⁷ and several curricula included in this review were developed for use with adolescents or young adults. However, this and other reviews¹⁸ show there is less research on these youth-focused curricula compared to those for adults. This includes more limited research on the theoretical motivations for youth-focused relationship education programs,¹⁹ the implementation approaches that are most appropriate for serving youth versus adults,¹⁷ and the long-term effectiveness of youth-focused programs.²⁰

When implementing an HMRE curriculum, program providers should actively consider whether the curriculum goals, activities, and intended outcomes align with programmatic goals and target population(s). When evaluating a program using a particular curriculum, evaluators need to ensure that the evaluation design and data collection instruments are appropriately tailored to assess the intended outcomes of the curriculum and program.

When considering topics to cover, HMRE program providers should consider the ultimate goals of their program, as well as who they plan to serve. The topics most commonly addressed by the HMRE curricula reviewed here were conflict management and resolution skills and communication skills. However, curricula designed for specific populations may need to include unique topics. For example, in this review, we identified a curriculum designed for use with adolescents that included content on 'planning for the future' and a curriculum designed for singles that included content on 'building new relationships.'

Practice Tips

Selecting an HMRE curriculum is vital to the success of your program and should include a careful assessment process, including a review of the key curriculum features described in this brief and how a curriculum aligns with the following characteristics of your organization:

- Target population(s)
- Program or logic model, including facilitator and training capacity, workshop format and location, etc.
- Budget
- Integration with other content
- Research/evaluation needs

Please see the HMRE Curriculum Assessment Tool for a list of questions that may help you assess your program needs and compare to available curricula.

A unique topic for couples could be relationship fidelity and commitment. Although these two domains of relationship quality are often conceptualized as part of a healthy relationship,²¹ they were not common topics addressed by the curricula reviewed here, and relatively few evaluations of HMRE programs examine outcomes related to fidelity and commitment.²² This disconnect between the goals of a program for couples (e.g., couples stay committed to each other) and the content of its curricula may lead to gaps in our knowledge about the effectiveness of programs.

Establishing consistent and research-based core components (topics and activities) could improve HMRE curriculum delivery and facilitate replication in different settings and with different populations.

Although flexibility in the implementation of curricula can be valuable, guidance from curriculum developers on what topics and activities are required (core components) versus which are optional is not always available. For example, given challenges in participant retention, it would be useful for HMRE program providers to

know whether a multi-session curriculum can be shortened by omitting some topics and/or activities and, if so, which ones. Additionally, identifying core components that are particularly useful or relevant for specific populations (e.g., youth, stepfamilies, etc.) could also be useful when programs seek to adapt curricula.

Curriculum developers may specify their core components as part of a logic model or theory of change, but sometimes specific components are named as core without any clear justification or research to support these requirements.¹¹ Evaluators can help empirically confirm the core components of a curriculum; however, formal testing of core components can be difficult and costly.¹¹

Incorporating more formal staff trainings into the guidance available for HMRE program providers and assessing the quality of these trainings could improve overall delivery of HMRE curricula.

Staff training is critical to ensuring that curricula are implemented as intended. Sufficient training equips staff to deliver a curriculum's core components with a high degree of quality and fidelity to the model.^{23,11} As discussed above, most curricula in this review offer some amount of training, although not all include formal, required trainings. Two actions could improve overall delivery of HMRE curricula: (1) Curriculum developers could incorporate more formal staff trainings into the guidance available for providers, and (2) evaluators could assess the quality of these trainings in future HMRE implementation evaluations. When possible, curriculum developers should consider offering in-person trainings to program staff who want to use their curriculum, as these provide an opportunity for trainees to interact with trainers and see how the curriculum is implemented in practice.⁵

Conclusion

This brief summarizes key features of HMRE curricula that have been the focus of recent program evaluation research. The brief is not an exhaustive inventory of all HMRE curricula, but provides details about a range of HMRE curricula developed for individuals (adults and youth) and couples that participate in HMRE programs. An HMRE Curriculum Assessment Tool provides additional guidance for HMRE program providers on using the information provided in this brief

to assess the alignment of existing curricula with the needs and goals of organizations that aim to promote healthy and stable romantic relationships through HMRE programming. Additional recommendations are made for curriculum developers and evaluators to consider in their work with HMRE program providers.



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HMRE Curriculum Assessment Tool

The curriculum you use is the foundation of your healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) program, and its core concepts should benefit your participants and align with the outcomes you desire to achieve. Selecting the right curriculum, and delivering with fidelity, is critical to your program's success. Below are a few questions to consider before making your final decision. While not exhaustive, these questions can help you assess a pre-selected curriculum or present you with an array of options available as you explore curricula. If you have pre-selected curricula in mind, answer these questions and then compare your answers to that curriculum. Alternatively, you can answer the questions in terms of what you would like to have or require in a curriculum, and then use the attached research brief and HMRE curriculum summary table (Appendix A) to make curricula decisions:

1. What is (are) the target population(s)? _____
2. What core concepts or skills are most important for my target population(s) to learn?
 - Conflict management and resolution
 - Communication skills
 - Parenting and/or the adjustment to parenthood
 - Recognizing relationship danger and warning signs
 - Recognizing destructive relationship patterns
 - Commitment
 - Self-awareness
 - Other: _____

Additional Considerations: If multiple concepts or skills need to be included, does one curriculum meet all those needs, or will I need to offer more than one curriculum?

3. What elements or activities would I like to include, and does the curriculum include these elements?
 - Couple vs. individual activities
 - Individual workbook activities
 - Interactive activities
 - Role play activities/practice opportunities
 - Small-group discussion and activities
 - Take-home activities/homework
 - Videos
 - Other _____
4. Does my program budget account for the purchase of required curriculum materials/products?
 - No
 - Yes

Additional Considerations: There are free or low-cost curricula available. To access a guide outlining those options, go to healthymarriageandfamilies.org.

5. Will I be integrating this HMRE curriculum into an existing program or curriculum?
 - No

- Yes

If yes, what are the implications (time, concept integration, facilitation)? _____

6. Will I need to tailor a curriculum to meet the specific needs of my community and target population(s) (for example, language adaptation, cultural adaptation, online delivery, etc.)?

- No
- Yes

If yes, what adaptation(s) do I need? _____

7. Once you have a curriculum identified, think about the adaptations that may be required. Are they informal or formal adaptations?
- Informal Adaptations: Small changes or adjustments I can make on my own that do not alter the fidelity of the curriculum.
 - Formal Adaptations: Bigger changes or cuts to the curriculum that require working directly with the curriculum developer to oversee and approve.

If formal adaptations are needed, do I have the capacity and the resources to work with the developer to make these adaptations? _____

8. What is my program's facilitator model or capacity?

- One facilitator
- Two facilitators
- More than two facilitators

9. What level of curriculum training am I able to offer my staff, and does this align with the developer's requirements and my program budget?

- In-person training through curriculum developer
- Online certification
- Self-guided training/certification

10. Will my program be evaluated?

- No
- Yes

If yes, does the curriculum align with evaluation measures (or can the evaluation measures align with curriculum content)? _____



Appendix A

HMRE Curriculum Summary Table

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
Active Relationships	<p>Individuals ages 18 and up, couples, youth ages 12-18, and children ages 3-18 with a caregiver.</p> <p>Primarily serves seven populations: military, school/youth, fathers, Christians, Head Start population, Spanish speakers, and individuals who are incarcerated or re-entering into society</p>	<p>Focuses on topics such as communication, conflict resolution, emotion management, abuse prevention, defining and changing destructive behaviors, mindfulness, life skills, social skills, goal setting, responsible planning, dating safety, physical attraction, romance, commitment, and choosing wisely (predictors of relationship satisfaction)</p> <p>Additional content unique to some curricula: responsibilities toward children, family safety, blended/stepfamilies, parenting and healthy co-parenting, impact of prior relationships, financial management, and team building</p> <p>Content unique to the military curriculum: resilience and readiness, privacy of thoughts, depression and family safety, compassion and forgiveness, reintegration tools, healing emotional wounds, and ideas for staying close</p>	Spanish language versions or Christian versions of some curricula are available	Family, group, and team activities, such as games, races, and practical exercises	Ranges from 6-24 hours	Length of training varies by curriculum but typically 8-16 hours across 3 days-1 week
Basic Training for Couples	Dating, engaged, or married African American couples	Focuses on increasing awareness of the benefits of marriage, improving communication and conflict management skills, and increasing commitment to relationship to lead to marital stability	Unknown	Assignments, homework, and weekly affirmations. Concludes with graduation	8 weeks	Unknown

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<u>Becoming Parents Program</u>	Couples expecting a child (married or unmarried not specified)	Focuses on reducing the predictable challenges of new parenthood by strengthening the couple's resilience, promoting self-care and community support, and bringing research about infant communication and development directly to parents	Adaptations available for low-income couples and Hispanic/Latino populations	Experiential learning exercises, individual workbook activities, couple activities, small-group discussion and activities, video clips, take-home activities, and practice opportunities	Designed as a series of modules, which may run at different lengths depending on the chosen module. Length of time ranges from 21-36 hours, with 32 hours as the most commonly used version	4-day training
<u>Connections: Dating and Emotions</u>	Grades 6-11	Focuses on relationship development, effective communication skills, awareness of destructive patterns, managing feelings, self-awareness, personal growth, emotion regulation, and interpersonal success	Unknown	Discussion, large- and small-group activities, lecture, PowerPoints, and workbook activities	15 sessions, 1 hour each	Training is not required
<u>Connections: Marriages and Relationships</u>	Grades 11-14	Teaches young adults the practical skills for creating – and sustaining – healthy, meaningful relationships. Major goals include the strengthening of self-awareness, self-confidence, and communication skills. Additionally, the lessons introduce issues such as roadblocks to relationships, building on individual strengths, how family experiences shape relationship expectations, communication and conflict resolution, life goals, love, commitment, and the realities of marriage	Unknown	Discussion, large- and small-group activities, lecture, PowerPoints, workbook activities, and engaging marriage experiential activity	20 lessons, 50 minutes each	Training is not required

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<i>Couple Communication</i>	Couples, including distressed couples	Focuses on communicating more effectively, making better decisions together, creating faster and better resolutions to conflict, and increasing satisfaction while strengthening the relationship	N/A	Brief didactic presentations, role-play, and homework exercises	Two options: (1) group setting with instructor; 4 sessions, 2-3 hours each, or (2) individual couple with instructor, often 6 sessions, 50 minutes each	2-day training
<i>Exploring Relationships and Marriage with Fragile Families</i>	African American couples	Designed to help romantically involved parents gain the knowledge and skills that can strengthen their relationships and provide a practical way for them to explore a healthy marriage. Specific topics include practical realities of marriage and understanding own perspectives toward relationship and marriage issues, conflict management, respectful communication, keeping love alive, commitment, and outlook of future	Unknown	Role-play in small groups of 6-10 couples	8 sessions	2-day training

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<u>Hold Me Tight®: Conversations for Connection</u>	Couples (married or unmarried not specified)	Focuses on seven topics: (1) identifying negative and destructive remarks to get to the root of the problem; (2) learning to look beyond immediate, impulsive reactions to identify raw spots being hit; (3) de-escalating conflict and building emotional safety; (4) increasing partner accessibility, emotional responsiveness, and deep engagement with each other; (5) forgiveness; (6) emotional connection through sex; and (7) being mindful to maintain connection	Workshop content is available in 16 languages Versions available for parents and their teenage children, Christian couples, and partners facing cardiac disease Online version available	Teaching segments, video clips from experts, quizzes, video clips of couples, conversation exercises, home exercises, and supportive text messages Workshops supplement book: <i>Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love</i>	8 sessions, 2-3 hours each, usually held over a 2-day period Can be implemented over the course of 10 weeks	Training is not available or required, although a facilitator's guide is available Although not required, most facilitators are trained in Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT)

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<u>Love Notes 3.0 Classic</u>	At-risk youth and young parents, ages 14-25	Focuses on knowing oneself; forming and maintaining healthy relationships; frameworks for assessing relationships and making decisions; recognizing unhealthy relationships and warning signs; effective communication skills and conflict management; intimacy and sexual values; pacing relationships; consent and planning for sexual choices; unplanned pregnancy and impact on child of turbulent relationship; co-parenting relationships; identity development; how the order of school, commitment and babies impact future; and optional bonus content on impact of technology on relationships and sexting	Sexual Risk Avoidance; (SRA) Love Notes 3.0 Classic - Evidence Based Program Model (EBP); Love Notes SRA EBP Adaptations are available Also has a list of allowable and unallowable adaptations	Complete lesson plans, PowerPoint slides, popular media and lively activities (drawing, sculpting, skills practice, role-plays, stories, films, and music), and trusted adult-teen activities	13 sessions, 1 hour each (Total: 13 hours) 1-hour bonus lesson on technology and social media	Training is required for the Evidence Based Programs; 3-day training includes curriculum overview and explanation of theory of change, in-depth lesson-by-lesson examination, hands-on use of the curriculum's essential teaching tools, and examples of the flexibility of curriculum implementation
<u>Love's Cradle</u>	Low-income, unmarried couples with children	Focuses on relationship education skills, conflict management, trust, marriage, money, complex family relationships, and deals with issues of coupleship and adjustment to parenting	Unknown	Small group discussions and spiral learning technique (repeated lessons with increasing complexity)	16-hour core program and 10 booster sessions	3-day training or Relationship Enhancement skills session, leadership, and supplemental topics

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<i>Loving Couples, Loving Children</i>	Low-income, unmarried couples who are expecting a child	General content areas are relationships, parenting, and poverty. Provides participants with (1) tools and skills that will improve their relationships with each other and their children; (2) a respectful environment to support individual learning; and (3) opportunities to explore and build on personal experiences	Adaptation available for couples experiencing episodes of situational domestic violence	Videotaped “talk shows” of interviews with low-income couples, group discussions, brief teaching by facilitator, and exercises related to each week’s topic	21 weekly sessions; 2 hours each (Total: 42 hours)	Facilitators must be trained; details of training unknown
<i>Mastering the Mysteries of Love</i>	Couples who are married (newly or for a long time), seriously dating, cohabiting, or engaged	Teaches couples in stable relationships how to use relationships skills to deepen their love by forming new habits while solving current relationship issues	Adaptations for stepfamilies, sacramental love, and parenting skills	Group discussions, DVD, role-play, and practice activities	16 total hours that can be taught in: (1) 8 evening sessions, (2) 1-day program plus four evening sessions, or (3) 2-day program	Training information unknown; provides Leader’s guide with instructions
<i>OurRelationship</i>	Can participate as a couple or an individual but must be in a relationship	Communication, emotional distance, trust, infidelity, and resolving arguments related to money or parenting	Available in Spanish	Online lessons delivered primarily via videos with coach calls during the day, evening, and weekends	Approximately 7-8-hours over a 2-month span; however, participants can move through the program their own pace.	6-hour training either in-person or remote with additional supervision

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
PICK (Premarital, Interpersonal, Choices and Knowledge) a Partner	Intended for singles of all ages (middle school-elderly)	Teaches two main points: (1) how to pace the development of a relationship in a healthy way, so that the “love is blind” syndrome is avoided; and (2) five areas to get to know about a partner that accurately predicts what they will be like in a long-term relationship	Available in Spanish and Mandarin Small group video discussion format Workbooks available for military individuals, young adults, and Christians	Lecture with video clips to assist in the teaching sections, large group discussions, small group breakout activities, discussion groups, and workbook reviews of current relevant research	Approximately 90-minute sessions (Total: about 8 hours)	No formal training but two ways to receive certification: (1) attend live certification seminar, or (2) review Instructor’s Certification Packet and pass an online test
PREP 8.0	Couples, both married and unmarried, attending with a partner	PREP 8.0 is the most current adaptation of PREP’s couple curricula, succeeding <i>Within Our Reach</i> Focuses on strategies and skills for healthy relationships, including effective communication, conflict management, warning signs of damaging patterns, awareness building around intimate partner violence, deepening commitment, maintaining fun & friendship, stress & anger regulation, expectation setting, and decision making as a team	Will be available in Spanish in 2020 ePREP, a self-led, online version is available for couples PREP for Strong Bonds, a military-based version Adaptations available for singles, Christians, workplace skills, singles in the military, incarcerated men, and men re-entering society after incarceration	Individual, couple, small- and whole-group activities, discussions designed to practice and improve skill and strategy acquisition, videos of real couples, and lecture videos to enhance teaching and learning	12 modules, 1 hour each (Total: 12 hours)	3-day training Flexible training models available upon request, as well as technical assistance for continuous quality improvement

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<u>Prepare/Enrich Relationships Assessment</u>	Couples, married or unmarried	Helps couples explore strength and growth areas, strengthen communication skills, identify and manage major stressors, resolve conflict, develop a more balanced relationship, explore family of origin issues, discuss financial planning and budgeting, establish personal, couple, and family goals, and understand and appreciate personality differences	Standard assessment includes satisfaction in 12 relationship categories. Additional versions designed for marriage and education enrichment, parenting, pre-adoption/ foster care, and Catholics	Small group activities	45-minute online survey and 4-8 feedback sessions	Attend 6-hour live workshop or 6-hour online training
<u>Relationship Smarts PLUS 4.0</u>	Adolescents, ages 12-16	Focuses on increasing self-awareness; forming healthy relationships; problems, warnings, and dangerous relationships; communication and conflict; intimacy and sexual decisions; how the order of school, commitment, and babies impact the future; and correcting faulty beliefs around social media, sexting risks, online porn	Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) adaptation available	PowerPoint presentations, youth produced films, activities (drawing, sculpting, skills practice, role-plays, stories, films, and music), and parent-teen activities	13 sessions, 1 hour each (Total: 13 hours)	Training is available. 3-day recommended training includes curriculum overview and explanation of theory of change, in-depth lesson-by-lesson examination, hands-on use of the curriculum's essential teaching tools, and examples of the flexibility of curriculum implementation

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<i>Smart Steps for Stepfamilies</i>	Remarried or partnered couples and their children (ages 6-17)	Focuses on stepfamily myths, realistic expectations for adults and children, stages of stepfamily development, legal issues, finances, defining roles and rules, developing empathy, understanding child development, stepparent-stepchild relationships, communication with child's other parent, and building respectful and caring relationships	Available in Spanish	Informational presentations, group discussion, and multi-media use Children and adults attend parallel sessions and partake in joint activities together at end of session	6 sessions, 2 hours each (Total: 12 hours)	Unknown
<i>Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family</i>	Co-parenting single parents	Five goals: (1) prepare unmarried parents to set goals and create a healthy future for their children; (2) help unmarried parents establish a positive co-parenting relationship; (3) ensure ongoing involvement of both parents, especially the father, in children's lives; (4) encourage ongoing payment of child support and other supports by non-custodial parent; and (5) prepare unmarried parents to make healthy decisions with their child	Adaptations are in development; details unknown Most classes start with two lessons in the first module to set the stage for the series. Then, lessons may be used in any order based on need and interest	Mini-lectures and experiential activities	24 lessons, 60-90 minutes each, organized in 6 modules	No training required

CURRICULUM	TARGET POPULATION	OVERVIEW OF TOPICS	ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE	ACTIVITIES	DURATION	FACILITATOR TRAINING OPTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
<i>Within My Reach</i>	Individuals attending alone; can be single or in a romantic relationship	Focuses on healthy relationship strategies and skills including prioritizing safety for self and children, skillful talking and listening, warning signs of damaging patterns, exploring personal needs and expectations, safety strategies for relationship violence, the chemistry of love, forgiveness and infidelity challenges, blended family considerations, relationship decision making, and understanding personality differences	Available in Spanish	Individual, small- and whole-group activities and discussions designed to practice and improve skill and strategy acquisition, videos of people, and lecture videos to enhance teaching and learning	Flexible 14-hour format, with a recommended run-time between 8-14 hours	3-day training Flexible training models available upon request as well as technical assistance for continuous quality improvement
<i>Within Our Reach</i>	Couples (married or unmarried not specified) Has been implemented with economically disadvantaged populations	This PREP curriculum empowers couples to replace communication danger signs with proactive strategies for respectful talking and listening. It explores sharing fun and satisfying intimate needs by working as a team to nurture and support each other; managing stress and reducing the negative effects of stress on a relationship; recognizing and communicating issues and expectations; planning for the future; understanding the impact of past experiences on a couple's future; and acknowledging long term satisfaction through commitment	Available in Spanish 8-hour format available	Small-group and whole-group activities and independent work	Flexible format (2-32 hours), 16 units, suggested 110 minutes each Recommended dosage between 8-12 hours	3-day training, 8 hours per day

Appendix A References

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About the MAST Center

The Marriage Strengthening Research and Dissemination Center (MAST Center) conducts research on marriage and romantic relationships in the U.S. and healthy marriage and relationship education (HMRE) programs designed to strengthen these relationships. The MAST Center is made up of a team of national experts in marriage and relationship research and practice, led by Child Trends in partnership with Public Strategies and the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University.

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