

Marriage and relationship education group facilitators describe promising practices in program delivery

Group facilitators in Texas marital education programs share their experiences.

Summary

Interviews with the facilitators of federal-sponsored Marriage and Relationship Education classes in Texas yielded interesting findings about the skills necessary to effectively engage a group interested in strengthening their marriages and relationships. Group facilitators are on the front lines of relationship education and understanding their perspective of what works in program delivery can be helpful in increasing the effectiveness of these classes. All participants in these interviews were teaching from the *Within My Reach* and *Within Our Reach* (PREP-based) programs.

- Effective presenters are knowledgeable about the subject matter, possess good listening skills, employ a sense of humor, and are skilled at engaging an audience.
- Flexibly responding to the audience's needs within a presentation was widely acknowledged as a significant component in an educator's toolkit. This ability to respond to the participants appropriately as well as bring the discussion back to the curriculum is important.
- Educators characterized a successful presentation as one in which open dialogue occurred between themselves and the participants – this dialogue created a positive and fun learning environment.
- Educators reported understanding that the goal of these state supported relationship

classes was to provide couples the tools necessary to strengthen their relationships and that this may have an influence on decreasing the divorce rate in the state of Texas.

- Educators believed the classes were effective in strengthening the participants' communication skills and accomplishing the goals of the program.



Including the voices of those who conduct marriage education programs is an important part of understanding what works and where improvements can be made in service delivery. Other research briefs in this series highlight the perspectives of participants from a variety of demographic and ethnic groups.

Funding for this project was provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant: 90FE0019. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

Contributors to this Brief:

Steven M. Harris, Ph.D.
Texas Tech University

Andrew P. Daire, Ph.D.
University of Central Florida

Nivischi Edwards
University of Central Florida

Austin Houghtaling
Texas Tech University

James Drake
Texas Tech University

February 2009

