

POLICY 17:

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

NO DATA UPDATE IS AVAILABLE FOR POLICY 17
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Why Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Policy Matters. States that seek to promote financial stability for families and brighter futures for children can do so by promoting healthy family relationships. Evidence indicates that healthy marriages are associated with significantly better outcomes for both children and parents. More specifically, research shows that the economic advantages of marriage 1) surpass those achieved by cohabitating couples, 2) can accrue to low-wage couples and 3) lower poverty among children and women.⁹⁰ Consequently, state policy to strengthen families could include supporting healthy marriages among adults who consider marriage an option. Research indicates that marriage preparation and marriage skills training can promote healthy marriages by enhancing communication, conflict management and satisfaction among couples.⁹¹

Key State Policy Measures. States can work to promote healthy marriages, and thereby strengthen families, through the following research-tested marriage and relationship education policies:

17.1 Couples and marriage education for adults. Research indicates that couples education and marriage preparation can enhance couples' communication and conflict management skills.⁹² These studies also provide evidence that couples participating in programs that address domestic violence demonstrate greater relationship satisfaction and fewer instances of spousal physical violence. To promote these positive outcomes, states can initiate or expand couples education and marriage preparation programs.

17.2 Relationship education for youth. Research indicates that marriage education in high school can enhance the relationship skills of young people at a critical time when their behavior patterns are forming.⁹³ This research also suggests that certain education programs can reduce violence in dating relationships, and reduce factors that place youth at risk for adolescent pregnancy. To promote these benefits, states can initiate or expand relationship and marriage education programs in public high schools.

Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Policy Measures

Measure 17.1: Couples and Marriage Education for Adults

Has the state begun offering relationship skill-building services for adult couples?

Yes	Ariz., Ark., Calif., D.C., Fla., Idaho, Ill., Iowa, Ky., La., Mass., Mich., Minn., Neb., N.M., Ohio, Okla., S.C., Texas, Tenn., Utah, Va.
No	Ala., Alaska, Colo., Conn., Del., Ga., Hawaii, Ind., Kan., Maine, Md., Miss., Mo., Mont., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Ore., Pa., R.I., S.D., Vt., Wash., W.Va., Wis., Wyo.

Measure 17.2: Relationship Education for Youth

Has the state begun offering relationship skill-building services for high school students?

Yes	Fla., Okla., Pa., S.D., Tenn., Texas, Utah
No	Ala., Alaska, Ariz., Ark., Calif., Colo., Conn., Del., D.C., Ga., Hawaii, Idaho, Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kan., Ky., La., Maine, Md., Mass., Mich., Minn., Miss., Mo., Mont., Neb., Nev., N.H., N.J., N.M., N.Y., N.C., N.D., Ohio, Ore., R.I., S.C., Vt., Va., Wash., W.Va., Wis., Wyo.

Selected State Policies on Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education

STATE	17.1	17.2
	RELATIONSHIP AND MARRIAGE EDUCATION FOR ADULT COUPLES	RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION FOR YOUTH
Alabama	Yes	—
Alaska	—	—
Arizona	Yes	—
Arkansas	Yes	—
California	Yes [a]	—
Colorado	—	—
Connecticut	—	—
Delaware	—	—
District of Columbia	Yes	—
Florida	Yes	Yes
Georgia	—	—
Hawaii	—	—
Idaho	Yes [b]	—
Illinois	Yes	—
Indiana	—	—
Iowa	Yes	—
Kansas	—	—
Kentucky	Yes	—
Louisiana	Yes	—
Maine	—	—
Maryland	—	—
Massachusetts	Yes [c]	—
Michigan	Yes [d]	—
Minnesota	Yes	—
Mississippi	—	—
Missouri	Yes	—
Montana	—	—
Nebraska	Yes	—
Nevada	—	—
New Hampshire	—	—
New Jersey	—	—
New Mexico	Yes	—
New York	—	—
North Carolina	—	—
North Dakota	—	—
Ohio	Yes	—
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes
Oregon	—	—
Pennsylvania	—	Yes
Rhode Island	—	—
South Carolina	Yes	—
South Dakota	—	Yes
Tennessee	Yes [e]	Yes [e]
Texas	Yes	Yes
Utah	Yes	Yes
Vermont	—	—
Virginia	Yes	—
Washington	—	—
West Virginia	—	—
Wisconsin	—	—
Wyoming	—	—
Year Data Collected	2005	2005

Data Source:

Theodora Ooms, Stacey Bouchet, and Mary Parke. *Beyond Marriage Licenses: Efforts in States to Strengthen Marriage and Two-Parent Families*. Washington, D.C., Center for Law and Social Policy, April 2004.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Administration for Children and Families. *Healthy Marriage Initiative Activities and Accomplishments 2002-2004*. Washington, D.C., June 2005.

Updated with unpublished data from the National Conference of State Legislatures, July 2005.

Data Table Notes:

- a. California offers programs only in Orange County.
- b. Idaho offers programs only in the City of Nampa.
- c. Massachusetts offers programs only in Boston.
- d. Michigan is running a five county pilot program.
- e. Tennessee offers programs only in Shelby County (Memphis).