
**COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK
GRANT PROGRAM**

Information Memorandum

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Office of Community Services
Division of State Assistance
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Washington, D.C. 20447
<http://www.acf.gov/programs/ocs/csbg>

Transmittal No. 89

Date: July 29, 2005

TO: State Community Services Block Grant Program Directors and
Community Services Block Grant State Association Directors

SUBJECT: Healthy Marriage Initiative under CSBG

PURPOSE: This memorandum clarifies the use of funds under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) in the planning, coordination, integration, strengthening, and expansion of public and private assistance related to the activities known as the Healthy Marriage Initiative.

BACKGROUND: President Bush has proposed a Healthy Marriage Initiative to help couples who choose marriage to have greater access, on a voluntary basis, to services through which they can develop the skills and knowledge to form and sustain healthy marriages. Research has shown that, on average, children raised in households headed by married parents fare better than children who grow up in other family structures. Through education and counseling programs, faith-based, community, and government organizations promote healthy marriages and a better quality of life for children. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has encouraged the formation and maintenance of healthy marriages and families as part of its overall strategy to help low-income people achieve family and child development goals, and greater economic self-sufficiency.

Over the past four years, many community organizations, including designated community action agencies, faith-based groups, and public human service agencies, have undertaken special initiatives designed to support the formation and stability of healthy marriages, often with financial support from ACF program offices. Some progress has been made to expand the current knowledge base about which marriage support programs are most effective and culturally appropriate to meet the needs of diverse, low-income families to improve their marital health and stability.

DISCUSSION:

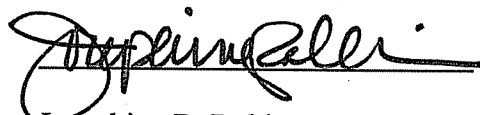
The Office of Community Services seeks to encourage the use of CSBG funds to engage in a variety of community services that support couples in their efforts to form and sustain healthy marriages as part of their overall program that alleviates the effects of poverty on families and children. Language in Section 676b(3)(D) of Title II of the Community Services Block Grant Act allows States to provide funds to eligible entities to support innovative community and neighborhood-based initiatives related to the purposes of this Act, which may include supporting healthy marriages and other initiatives with the goal of strengthening families and encouraging effective parenting.

Activities conducted within a healthy marriage program are included in one of the six national goals for community action, namely, *Goal 6: Low-income people, especially vulnerable populations, achieve their potential by strengthening family and other supportive systems.*

In addition to providing funding for the support of healthy marriage activities through the block grant, the Office of Community Services has announced the availability of funds under the CSBG T&TA Initiative. This funding is available under CFDA Number 93.570 and Funding Opportunity number HHS-2005-ACF-OCS-ET-0043. This funding opportunity relates to training and technical assistance resources for the Community Services Network. This new grant program will fund a limited number of competitive discretionary grants to fund training and technical assistance for the Community Services Network focusing on improving the quality of programs carried out under the CSBG Act and the delivery of healthy marriage services among low income people served by community action agencies.

In summary, healthy marriage activities and programs may constitute an enhancement of CSBG programs and purposes and may be considered, significant and necessary to the grantee mission, and an outcome intended by the funding program to which costs could be assigned.

For further assistance and questions relating to this Information Memorandum, please contact your assigned State contact.



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