



Family Expectations

Healthy Marriage Grantee
(low-income, unwed expectant
or new parents)

Organization Description

Public Strategies, Inc. (PSI) is a private project management and strategic planning firm with a home office in Oklahoma City, and offices in Denver, Tulsa, Houston, and the Washington D.C. area. With over 120 full- and part-time employees, PSI serves public, private, and not-for-profit organizations in sectors such as education, business, and human services, and is committed to meeting the distinct needs of clients by providing a variety of services.

Project Description

- The Family Expectations (FE) program has provided relationship education services to Oklahoma County couples since 2005. The current OFA grant allows the program to serve 100 low-income, unwed expectant couples or couples with a child less than three months of age each year.
- FE is a comprehensive, couple-based intervention with an overarching goal of increasing family well-being by helping expectant couples and new parents strengthen their relationships or marriages prior to and immediately following the birth of a child.
- The core of the program is an intense series of group workshops that the couple attends together. The workshops address issues such as healthy communication, anger and stress management, baby care, child development, and the importance of preserving couple time.
- Upon completion of the workshops, couples are invited to attend a variety of additional post-workshop activities that refresh couple communication skills and provide new information on child development and sustaining healthy relationships.

- Each couple is given access to a Family Support Coordinator that works collaboratively with them to develop a family plan, identify family strengths and needs, provide information and referrals, and help couples integrate the curriculum concepts learned into their daily life.

Outcomes

PSI is part of a national evaluation of programs serving low-income, unwed couples that are interested in marriage, beginning during pregnancy or around the time of their child's birth. This evaluation project, entitled Building Strong Families (BSF), is being conducted by Mathematica Policy Research under contract for the ACF. As part of this evaluation, PSI is prohibited from conducting its own evaluation activities, but is actively involved in supporting the national BSF evaluation process. PSI participants are involved in a rigorous impact analysis that includes random assignment to the program or a control group, and follow-up surveys with both groups at 12, 18, 36, and 60 months following enrollment in the evaluation.

Success Stories

Two Stories of Engagement

A Family Expectations couple entered the program in a rapidly declining relationship. The couple mentioned to both their Family Support Coordinator (FSC) and their Marriage Educators that they were currently together because of their expected baby, and that FE was their last hope of finding a way to make their relationship work. The couple later attended a booster session three months after the beginning of their workshop. At this session they introduced their new child and announced that they were getting married. They reminded the class that they did not expect to stay together when they entered the program, but they credited FE for providing them with a solid foundation on which to build their strong relationship. At the start of this couple's participation in FE, the father was opposed to marriage and viewed it only as a "piece of paper." He attributed this belief largely to the failure of both his parents' marriage and the marriage of his partner's parents. After completing their workshop group and meeting with their FSC, he came to the realization that marriage is a commitment to a relationship and family, and is integral to establishing a healthy support system for children. The couple was married in April.

Another FE couple entered the program while living in two different households: she with her mother and the couple's children, and he in his own apartment. After four unsuccessful attempts made by their FSC to schedule an initial in-person visit, the couple proceeded to attend their first office visit as well as all subsequent visits, and they later completed their 30-hour relationship education workshop. During one pivotal meeting with their FSC, the couple spoke openly about their relationship. She admitted that she did not express her feelings well, and he commented that he believed this was a barrier in their relationship. He continued his statement by saying that their participation in FE had allowed her to open up more and allowed him to know her better. It was this knowledge, he said, that provided him with the confirmation that he wanted to spend the rest of his life with her and their children. The couple announced their engagement during their next office visit.

For more information about Family Expectations, visit their website at: <http://www.familiesok.org/>



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