

Improving Public Health By Promoting Healthy Relationships and Family Formation

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AMTC & Associates

- Provides nonprofit management consulting, performance measurement, evaluation, and research for nonprofits, including faith-based organizations to measure performance and evaluate more than 170 programs in over 250 communities throughout the U.S.
- Has leveraged more than \$500 million for sustainable federal, state, and local programs, including over \$118 million in Healthy Relationship, Marriage, Fatherhood, funding.



Angela Turner, Principal AMTC & Associates



- Founded AMTC in 1997
- Has provided nonprofit management consulting for 30+ years
- Supports large-scale federal grant programs
- Serves a network of community-based nonprofit organizations located in 250 communities across 23 states

Brandon Osborn, Senior Research Associate, AMTC & Associates



- Joined AMTC in 2019
- Oversees and manages the AMTC research arm
- Principal at Lucimos LLC
- Over a decade of experience in research design and implementing/evaluating a variety of social services and health-related programs
- PhD in Public Health. Trained as an epidemiologist and implementation scientist

History of AMTC Involvement in Relationship Education

- **Welfare Reform (1998, W-2, Governor Tommy Thompson)**
 - W-2 welfare reform savings in Wisconsin were used by OIC of Greater Milwaukee to help launch funding of healthy marriage and fatherhood programs in Milwaukee.
- **DOL Workforce Development and Offender Reentry (Continuous funding since 2005)**
 - 31 grants totaling \$63 million; healthy relationship/marriage curriculum used in each grant.
- **HHS, ACF Healthy Relationship, Marriage, Fatherhood, PREP, and PREIS (2006, Bush launched. Obama, Trump, & Biden continued funding)**
 - 28 grants totaling more than \$118 million
- **HHS Community-Based Abstinence Education (2002-2010, Bush launched)**
 - 18 grants totaling more than \$48 million
- **HHS OPA, ACF, SAMHSA Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention & Substance/Mental Health Prevention Grants (2008 & 2009 Obama; 2016, Trump; 2020, Biden)**
 - 103 grants totaling more than \$146 million

Objectives

- Understand the benefits of healthy relationships and family formation
- Identify successful interventions for youth and young adults that address barriers to healthy relationship formation
- Identify how state agencies and policies can promote these outcomes



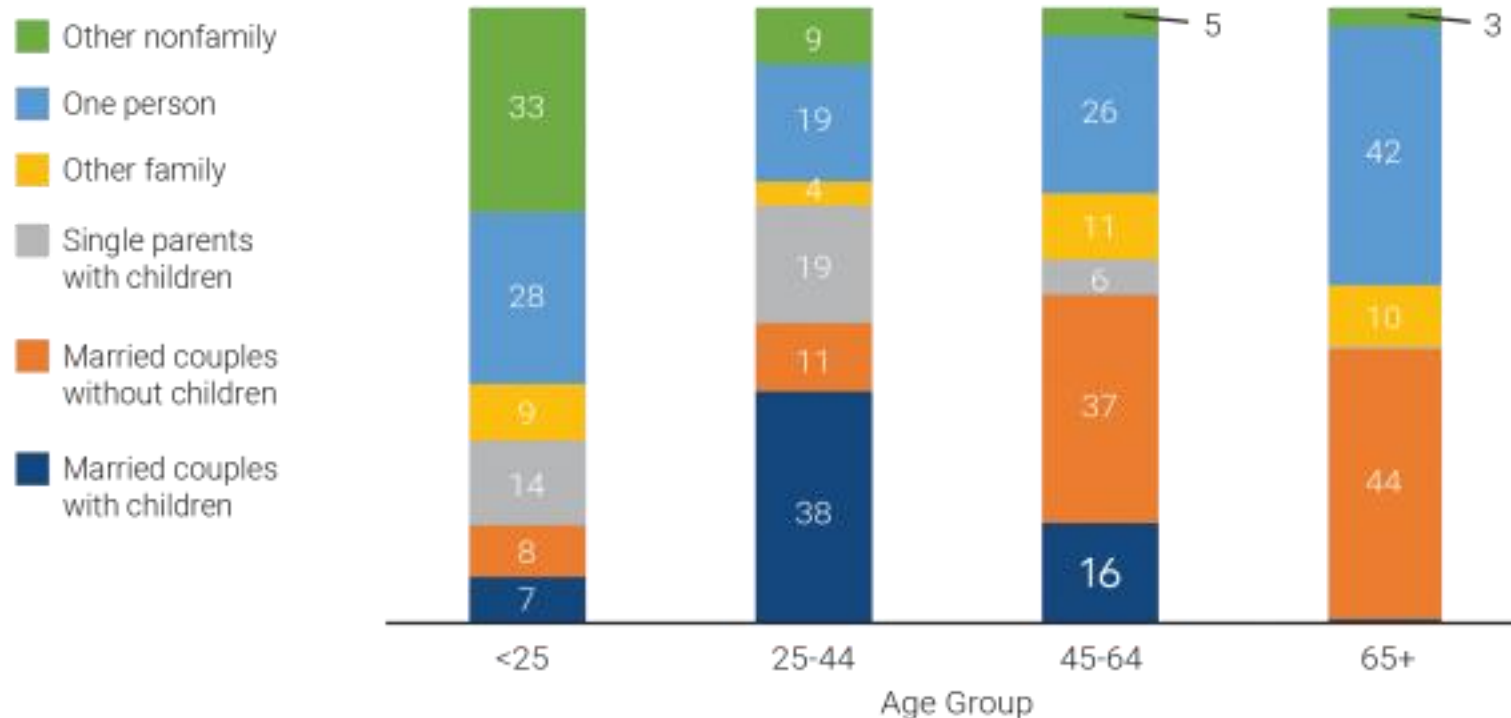


Impact of Healthy Relationships and Family Formation

Context and Importance

- Healthy relationships and family formation are foundational to overall well-being and public health outcomes.
- Youth and young adults are at a critical stage for forming lasting healthy relationships that impact future family life and societal well-being.
- State & local governments have a unique opportunity to support policies and programs that promote these foundations, benefiting public health and long-term socioeconomic outcomes.

Percent Distribution of U.S. Household Types by Age of Householder, 2017. U.S. Census Bureau

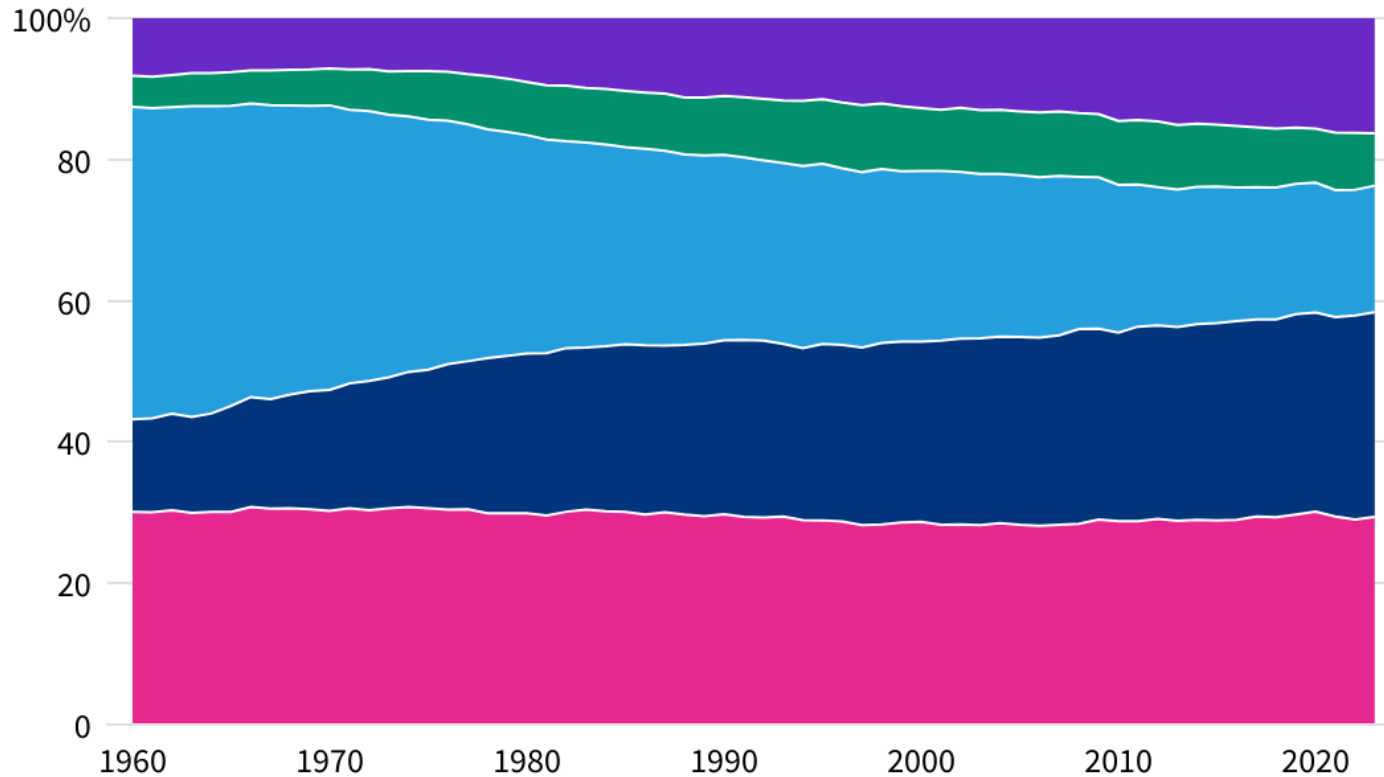


- 42% of those over 65 live alone. Divorce and dispersal of family contribute.
- Over Half of Young Adult Householders Live Alone or With Roommates
- Young adults continue to delay marriage and childbearing.

More than half of American households have no children.

Share of all households separated by household type, 1960–2023

Married no kids Single no kids Married parents Single parents Other



Parent categories include parents living with their own children under the age of 18. Other includes family households (such as adult relatives) and nonfamily households (such as nonmarried partners or roommates).

Source: [Census Bureau](#)

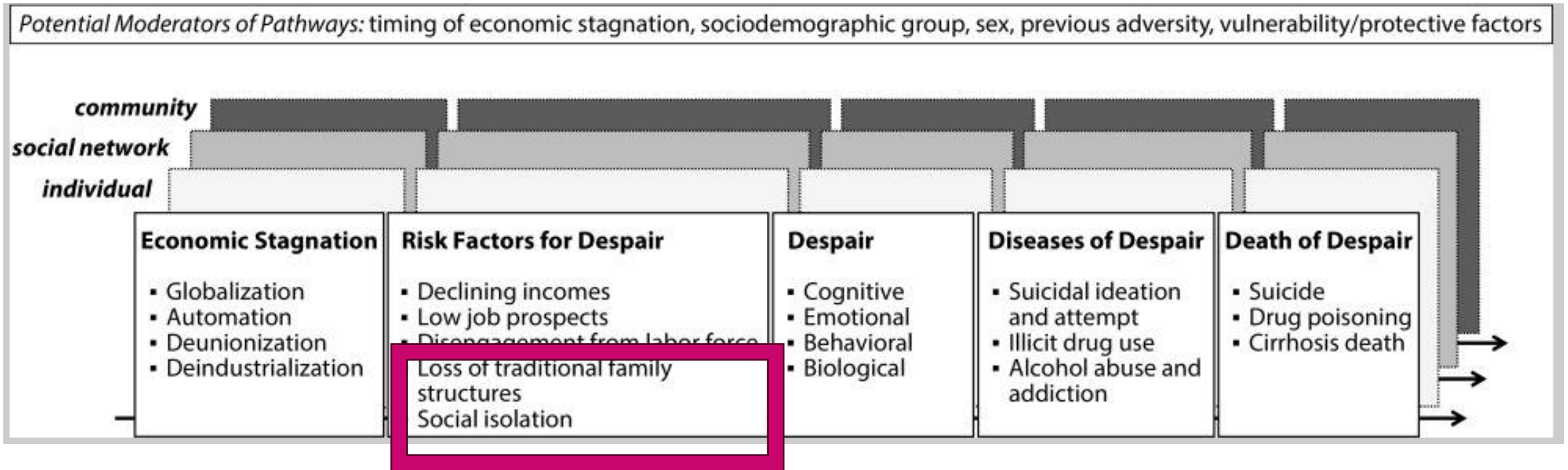
Since 1960, Single-person households increased more than fivefold, from 6.9 million in 1960 to 38.1 million in 2022.

The traditional family structure has declined.

USA FACTS



Loss of Family Structure and Social Isolation: Risk for Despair, Disease, and Death



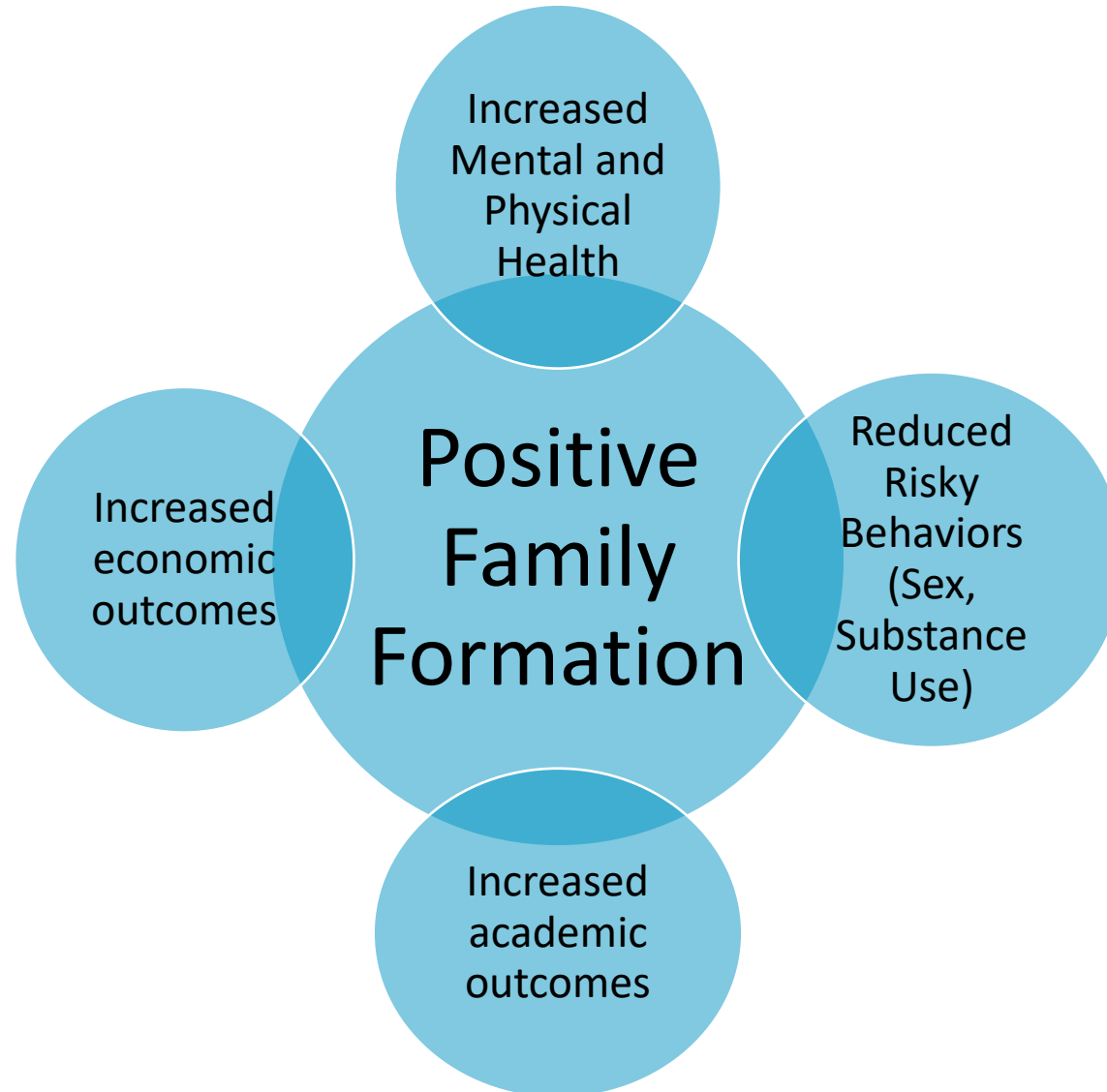
American Journal of Public Health, 2019. PMID: [PMC6506367](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31250000/)

Evidence on Marriage and Death

- Previous research has shown that married couples have had :
 - Lower levels of substance use (l.e. alcohol and drug use)
 - Better buffering of stress and better living conditions
 - Better access to healthcare and higher quality of care
- Recent study¹ examined the association between marital status and deaths from alcohol, drug overdose, and suicide among the U.S. population ages 25 and above from 2000 to 2021.
- Net of education, nonmarried people exhibited mortality rates 2-3x higher in alcohol and suicide deaths. 4-5x higher in drug-related deaths compared to married people.

¹Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, 2024 doi: 2378021241275429

Importance of Family Formation Across the Lifespan



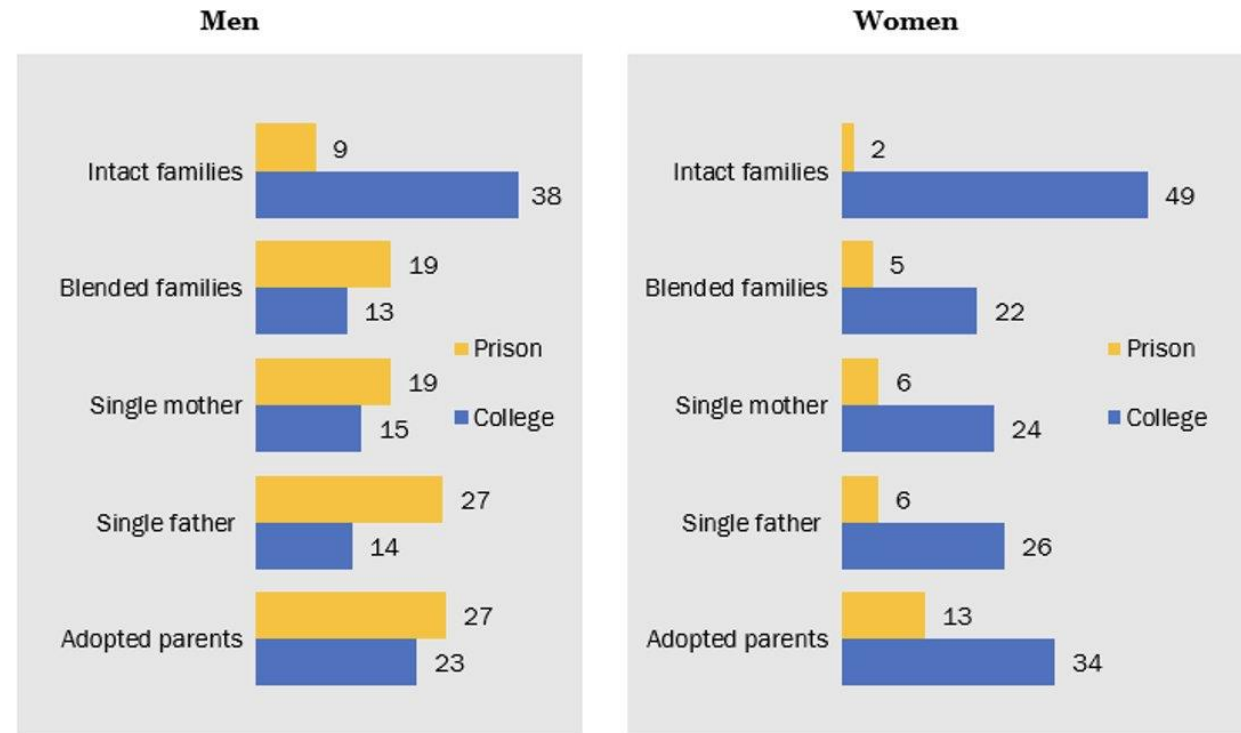
Importance of Family Formation

■ Societal Impact:

- Family stability and structure can break intergenerational cycles of poverty and illness.
- Strong families contribute to stronger communities, reduced crime rates, and improved educational outcomes.
- Family formation has long-term economic benefits, reducing state costs associated with healthcare, criminal justice, and welfare systems.

Prison or College Graduation for Young Men and Women, by Family Structure

%



Notes: Young adults' outcomes were measured by age 28.

Source: National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1997 (NLSY97).

Family Structure and Childhood Trauma



Children residing in households with adults unrelated to them are 8x more likely to die of maltreatment than children residing with 2 biological parents.¹

Trauma and adverse childhood experiences are common risk factors for co-occurring mental illness and substance use.

For example, childhood trauma increases the risk for substance use, other mental disorders, suicidality, and physical health conditions.^{2,3}

Over 30% of adults with substance use disorder had childhood trauma including emotional abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, or physical neglect.⁴

¹Pediatrics, 2002. PMID: 11927705

²Am J Prev Med, 1998. PMID: 9635069

³ Pediatrics, 2003. PMID: 12612237

⁴Psychiatry Res, 2020. PMID: 33157482

Success Sequence and Family Formation

Education programs promoting the success sequence have been effective at:

- Reducing poverty
- Goal Setting
- Preventing unintended pregnancy and adolescent pregnancy

But how have they promoted marriage and family formation?

Success Sequence and Potential Unintended Consequences

No long-term data to determine whether these programs have led to higher marriage rates or childbearing (unmeasured).

However, from a societal viewpoint:

- Marriage rates have not increased.
- Couples waiting or not enticed to have children because of educational and career goals may experience fertility issues etc.





Programs to Support Healthy Relationships and Family Formation

Critical Interventions for Youth and Young Adults (Ages 14 to 24)

Providing relationship education, like *Love Notes and Relationships Smarts Plus* in schools and communities helps young people build healthy communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making skills.¹

Funded by federal agencies like the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, and Department of Justice.



¹The Dibble Institute. dibbleinstitute.org

Healthy Marriage & Fatherhood Programs (HMRF)



These programs are implemented in diverse communities across the country (rural, urban, under-resourced) Offered to children and adults in schools, jails/prisons, churches, community-based settings, TANF programs, Child Support Offices, etc. Our HMRF clients operate in Florida, Missouri, Nevada, Wisconsin, and West Virginia.



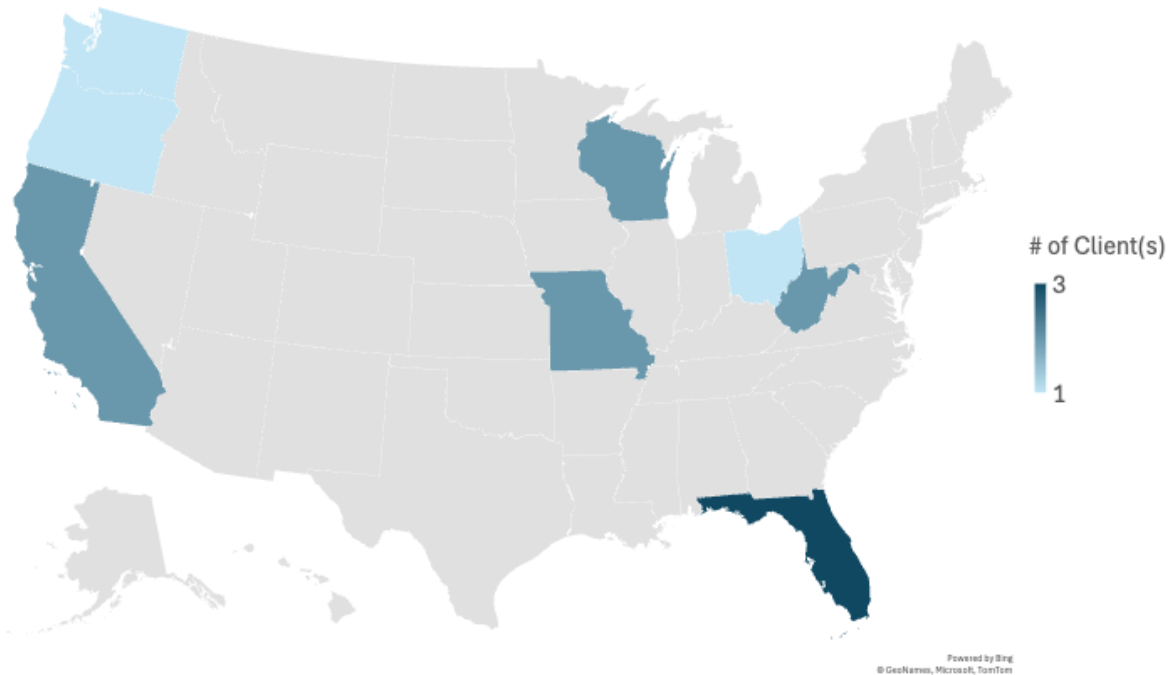
In addition to *Love Notes* and *Relationship Smarts Plus* (Marline Pearson & Dibble Institute), our clients have used *Within My Reach* And *Walking the Line* programs for adults (both Published by Scott Stanley & Marline Pearson PREP).



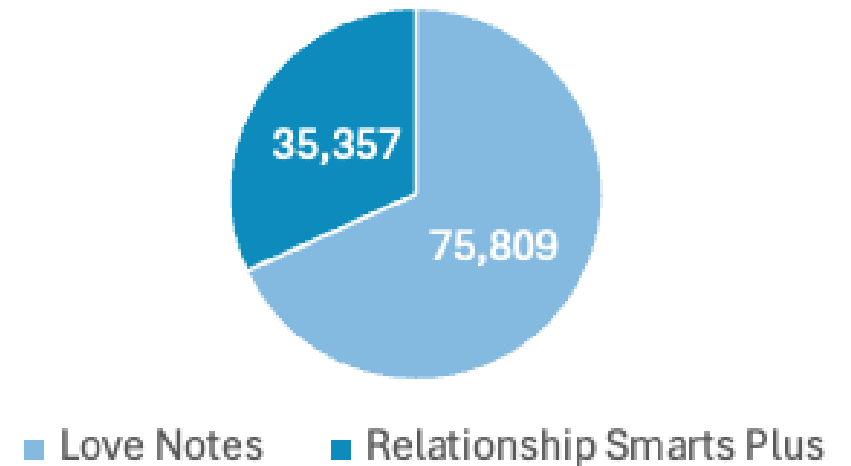
Getting parents on board is important for changing outcomes. *Within My Reach* and *Walking the Line* are taught to inmates immediately before release to improve future relationships and programming.

AMTC Clients using Dibbble Curricula

Geographic Reach of AMTC Clients Using Love Notes or Relationship Smarts Plus (n=14)



Participants Served

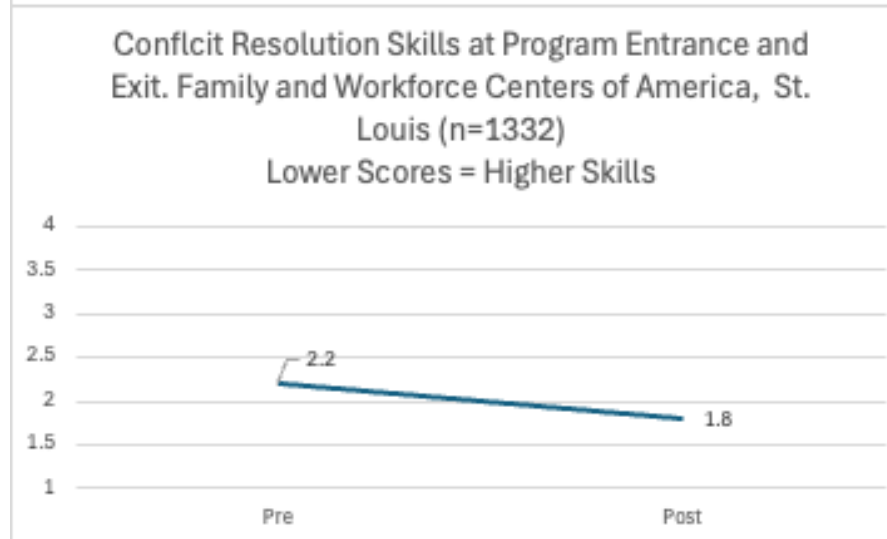
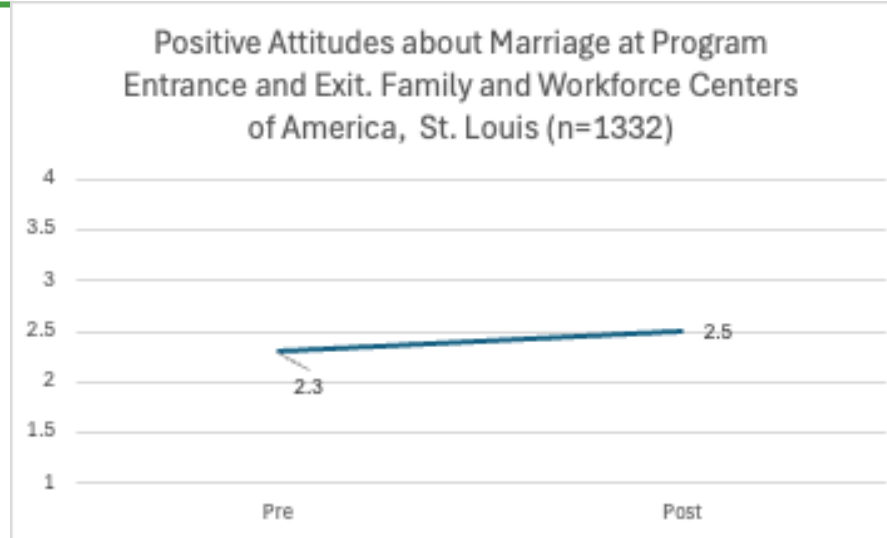


Critical Interventions for Youth and Adults

- These programs address known barriers to forming stable, supportive families.
- Address socioeconomic and cultural barriers that prevent youth and young adults from forming healthy relationships.
- Targeted: Programs for at-risk youth that provide mentorship and relationship-building skills can help prevent negative outcomes like teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and early relationship dissolution.
- Promote access to resources such as mental health services, family counseling, and financial literacy education.

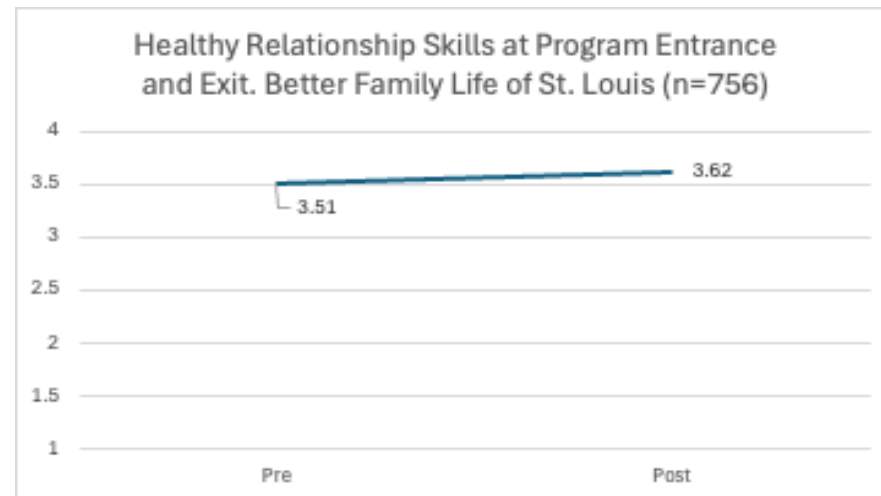
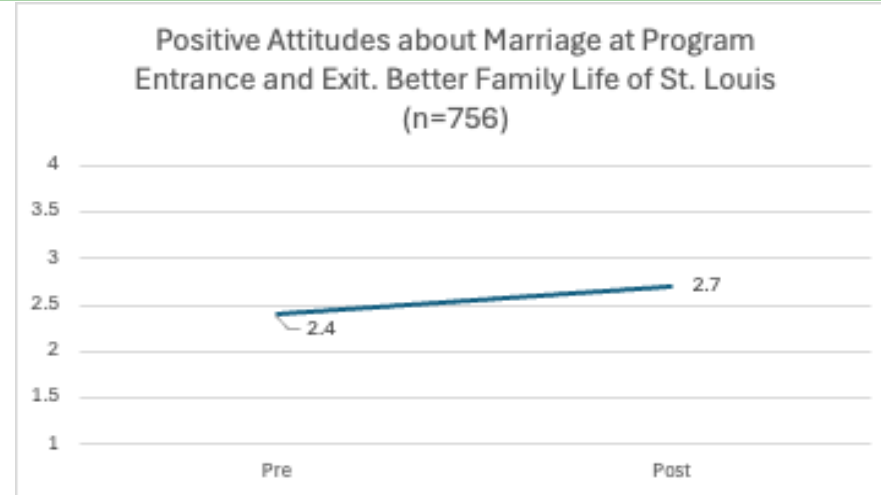
Healthy Marriage Program Outcomes

- Among our healthy marriage participants (n=1332) served by Better Family Life in St. Louis, we found a statistically significant improvement in positive attitudes towards marriage upon program completion.
- Additionally, conflict resolution skills also increased, and this was statistically significant.



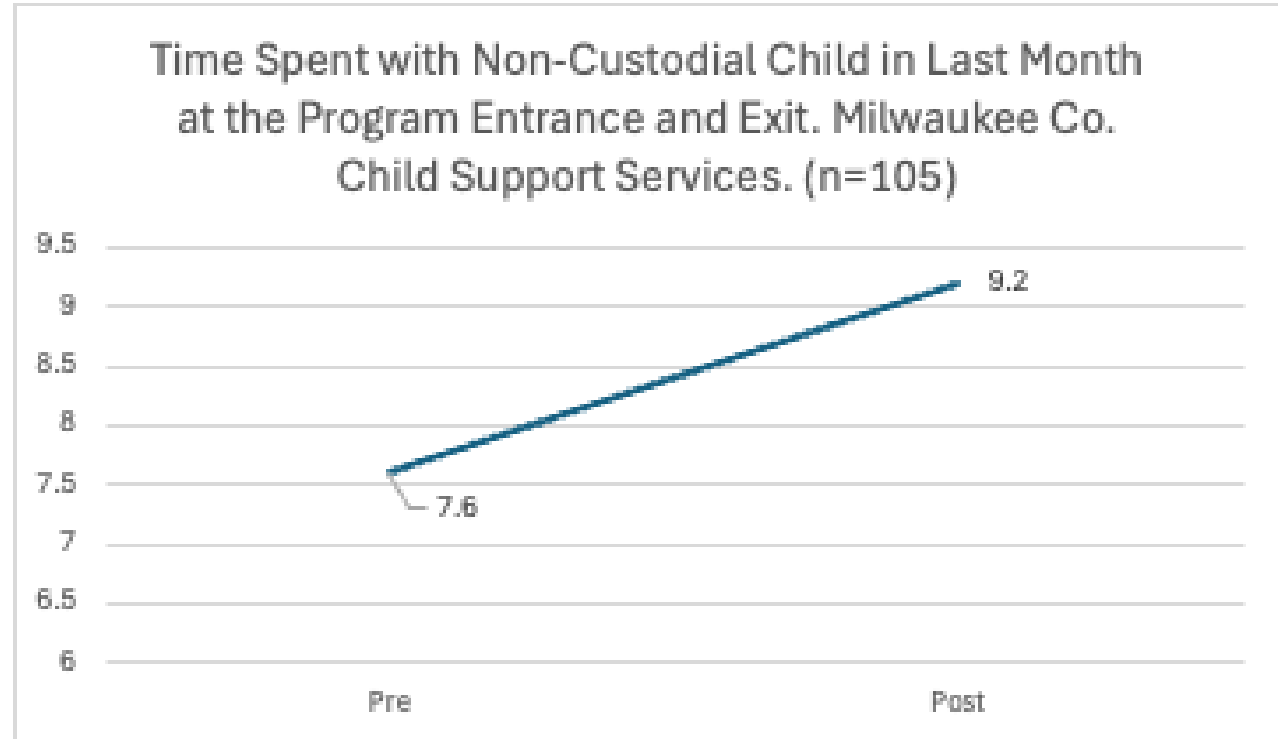
Healthy Marriage Program Outcomes

- Among our healthy marriage participants (n=756) with a different client in St. Louis (Families and Working Centers of America), we also found a statistically significant improvement in positive attitudes towards marriage upon program completion.
- Additionally, healthy relationship skills also increased, and this was statistically significant.



Fatherhood Program Results

- Among our fatherhood participants served by nonprofits in Milwaukee County, we found a statistically significant improvement in time spent with their child upon program completion ($t = -1.59$, $df = 104$, $p = 0.008$).
- **At program entrance, participants reported spending an average of 7.6 hours with their youngest child in the past month. This increased to 9.2 hours at program exit.**



Long-Term Healthy Marriage Program Data

- In Georgia, a Randomized-Controlled Trial¹ examined the long-term impact of *Relationship Smarts Plus* among high school students. Results found that:
 - Girls were almost 2.5 less likely to be in an unhealthy relationships 3 YEARS after program completion compared to the control group.

¹ Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education for High School Students: The Longer-Term Impacts of Relationship Smarts PLUS in Georgia OPRE Report Number: 2022-325



Today's Challenges and How State Directors Can Help

State Policies Impact Our Work

- Partisanship has created a patchwork of different policies across states making these programs difficult to implement.
- State legislatures banning sex education (sex ed) programs, or making it difficult for nonprofit organizations to provide programming in schools, may be unintentionally making it difficult to implement healthy relationship education
 - For example, California (Cal. Healthy Youth Act) mandates that sex ed programs in schools must be explicit and comprehensive. Thus, many of our programs do not qualify as they are not comprehensive enough.
 - In Florida (HB1069), even relationship-based education materials requires multiple rounds of review, approval, and public input to be approved in schools. Some schools are excluding these programs out of fear of possible non-compliance. Youth may not be getting this important messaging at home if they do not have an involved family or are part of a church.

Who gets impacted? Kids and families.

How You Can Help

Public Policy

- Encourage collaboration across sectors—education, healthcare, and social services—to promote programs that support healthy relationships and families.
- Ease the burden on non-profits looking to promote healthy relationship education in schools.

Funding Streams

- Create local funding for these initiatives to be invested in your states, yielding significant public health and economic benefits for future generations.
- TANF surplus funds. Commit a % of surplus funds every year to relationship education.

Takeaways



- Healthy relationships and family formation are key determinants of long-term public health outcomes.
- State governments have a unique opportunity to support policies and programs that promote these foundations.
- State policies that support relationship education and family formation interventions can improve overall population health and reduce future healthcare costs.



Questions?

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Visit us:

amtcassociates.com



Additional Resource Slides

The Issue: Mental and Emotional Well-being

- Lack of social connectedness, positive relationships, and traditional family structures has led to an epidemic of loneliness.
- These are all risk factors for poor mental health and substance use.
- The U.S. consistently ranks as one of the worst countries for mental health outcomes¹ and ranks only behind Ukraine (#1) for the highest depression² prevalence rate in the World. Most recent global data is from 2017 & 2019, respectively.
- The US also consumes more illicit drugs than any other country and has the highest drug-related death rates (2022).³

¹Lancet Psychiatry, 2022. PMID: [35026139](#)

²WHO Global Health Estimates, Depression and other Common Mental Disorders, 2017.

³United Nations WorldDrug Report, 2022.

Love Lives Are Not Neutral

The problem...



140,801

teen girls had babies in 2023.

50%

of teen mothers do not earn a high school diploma by age 22.



9.7%

of high schoolers report having experienced physical or sexual dating violence in the last year.

28%

of teens who have been in relationships are victims of **digital dating abuse**.



Relationship issues are a large precipitating factor of teen suicides which is the **2nd leading cause of teenage death**.

But there's hope!

A Proven Approach

Healthy relationship education...

reduces the risk of teen pregnancy by

46%



significantly reduces verbal aggression and violence in teens

helps young people exit unhealthy and dangerous relationships



reduces faulty relationship beliefs and helps youth direct their own love lives

improves students' **social and emotional** learning

