

—SUMMARY—

## Approaches to Providing Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programming for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations

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Over the past 10 years, the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), based in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children and Families (ACF), has awarded grants to organizations to provide Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education (HMRE) services. To explore strategies to help programs better serve those who identify along the spectrum of sexual orientation in HMRE programs, the Urban Institute, Public Strategies, and researchers from the Williams Institute at UCLA conducted the "Same-Sex Relationships: Updates to Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programming" (SUHMRE) study. This exploratory study was funded by OFA and overseen by ACF's Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE).

The purpose of the study was to explore specific approaches that could foster inclusion of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) populations in HMRE. The project involved analysis of data collected through four activities: (1) a literature review, (2) engagement with experts, (3) interviews with HMRE programs, and (4) a review of prominent HMRE curricula. Through the data collection and analysis, we developed and refined a *Framework for LGB-Inclusive HMRE Programming*. This framework highlights the external context and three domains—program, educator, and curriculum—all of which can influence inclusivity. Within each domain, we identified potential approaches for inclusion of LGB populations, for example:

- HMRE **programs** can partner with a local organization with experience serving LGB populations to conduct an inclusivity self-assessment.
- HMRE **educators** can seek opportunities to establish the workshop as an inclusive, welcoming environment by emphasizing the benefits of diversity and the importance of respect for all participants.
- HMRE **curricula** can ensure content does not assume heterosexuality or gender-based stereotypes.

Data collected during the SUHMRE project demonstrate that some programs and curricula have made important strides to increase the inclusion of LGB participants on their own, but there are still many opportunities for greater inclusivity.

The project culminated in the final report, *Approaches to Providing Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education Programming for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Populations*, available on the [Same-sex Relationships: Updates to Healthy Marriage and Relationship Programming project page](#).

This report summarizes key themes found and identifies potential strategies for more inclusive HMRE services. The primary audience for this report is OFA and technical assistance providers, who may translate the general strategies into a range of concrete, tailored recommendations for a variety of HMRE programs and contexts. HMRE program operators may also find the report useful and are encouraged to consult with OFA on whether and how to implement any of the strategies highlighted in this report.