



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER *for*  
HEALTHY MARRIAGE *and* FAMILIES

## **Relationship Education as a Strategy to Help Families Achieve Economic Self-Sufficiency**

Robyn Cenizal, Project Director, ICF International  
A. Laura Arnold, Evaluation Lead, University of Georgia



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Family Assistance

# Key Assumptions

- Healthy marriage is a central component of supporting families in their efforts to achieve economic, emotional and social stability and financial self-sufficiency.
- Core skills: communication, conflict management, parenting and financial literacy.
- Integration strategies can range from simple information dissemination to full engagement where curriculum is integrated into existing service delivery systems.



# Why the Investment?

- It is estimated that family fragmentation costs U.S. taxpayers *at least \$112 billion each and every year*, or more than \$1 trillion each decade.
- If the federal marriage initiative, for example, succeeds in reducing family fragmentation by just 1 percent, U.S. taxpayers will save an estimated \$1.1 billion each and every year. (Scafidi 2008)
- The official U.S. poverty rate in 2012 was 15% with 46.5 million people in poverty including 2 out of 10 children. (US Census)



# We Value Marriage

- 74.9% of high school seniors surveyed in 2010 said that “having a good marriage and family life” is “extremely important” and 78.7% expected to get married. (Monitoring the Future)
- The probability of adults getting married at some point in their lifetime is still at 90%. (Andrew Cherlin)



# Infrastructure

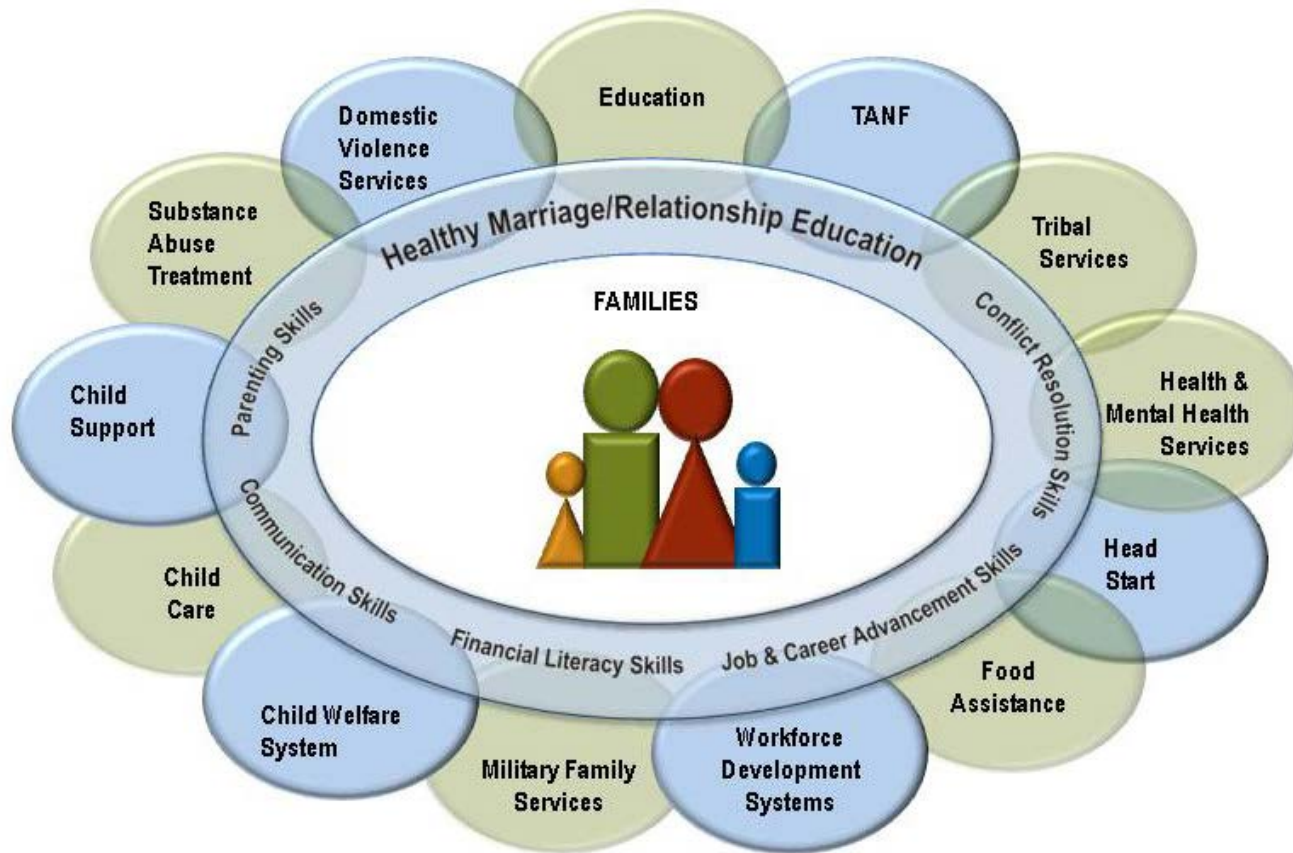
- Engage stakeholders
- Build the website
- Gather research
- Develop research-based products
- Determine evaluation protocols
- Integration Institutes



# Operationalize the Research

- The National Resource Center developed a formalized training strategy to:
  - Educate stakeholders on the research and relevance of healthy relationship skills.
  - Facilitate development of customized action plan.
  - Provide ongoing technical assistance in support of implementation.

# Safety-Net Stakeholders



# A Framework for Integration

Level 1

- Basic Engagement

Level 2

- Partnerships

Level 3

- Full Integration





# Agency Assessment

- What is the agency's service delivery method?
- Does the agency have a culture of collaboration?
- What level of integration is already being supported in the agency?



# Case Studies

- Over a period of three years, 205 safety-net service providers across the United States have attended a formalized one day training (“Integration Institutes”).
- Using a case study approach, we examine the influence of this training on five agencies, whose service delivery provision involves economic self-sufficiency.
- Data are drawn from structured interviews at 45- and 90-days post-training.



# Child Welfare Services

- County of San Diego Health and Human Services
- Post-Institute Outcomes:
  - Supervisors view healthy relationship education as a prevention strategy for domestic violence and a treatment tool for substance abuse providers.
  - Promotion of healthy marriage and relationship education as a tool for domestic violence prevention.
    - Via requirement of healthy relationship training in Requests for Proposals (RFP) for domestic violence and alcohol abuse prevention contract providers.
    - Goal: Get information into drug treatment facilities and home visitation programs.
  - Collaboration and support are being using the resources from the Institute, specifically targeted towards a Domestic Violence Prevention Summit the agency was coordinating.



# Child Support Services

- Meskwaki Nation
- Post-Institute Outcomes:
  - Agency leadership wants to integrate the healthy marriage and relationship skill information gleaned from the Institute into their new case management model as a matter of community.
  - Ideas were generated regarding training credits given to parents who are arrears in child support.
  - Partnerships were developed to collaboratively cross-train staff and integrate healthy relationship education into programming offered.
  - This effort is being incorporated as part of a new federally-funded case management model.



# Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

- Department of Public Health and Human Services, TANF Program
- Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF Program
- West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, TANF Program



# TANF (cont.)

- Post-Institute Outcomes:
  - Colleagues are catching the vision for integration of healthy relationship education into their services and are using the information and materials gathered at Institutes to inform their actions.
    - For example, one agency is distributing information and resources to clients who come into the office to get their TANF checks (Topsky)
    - Another agency focused on integrating healthy relationship education into TANF programs statewide via collaboration with colleagues to distribute flyers/materials at state childcare centers and to include National Resource Center links on state childcare resource/referral websites as well as the state child abuse prevention listserv.

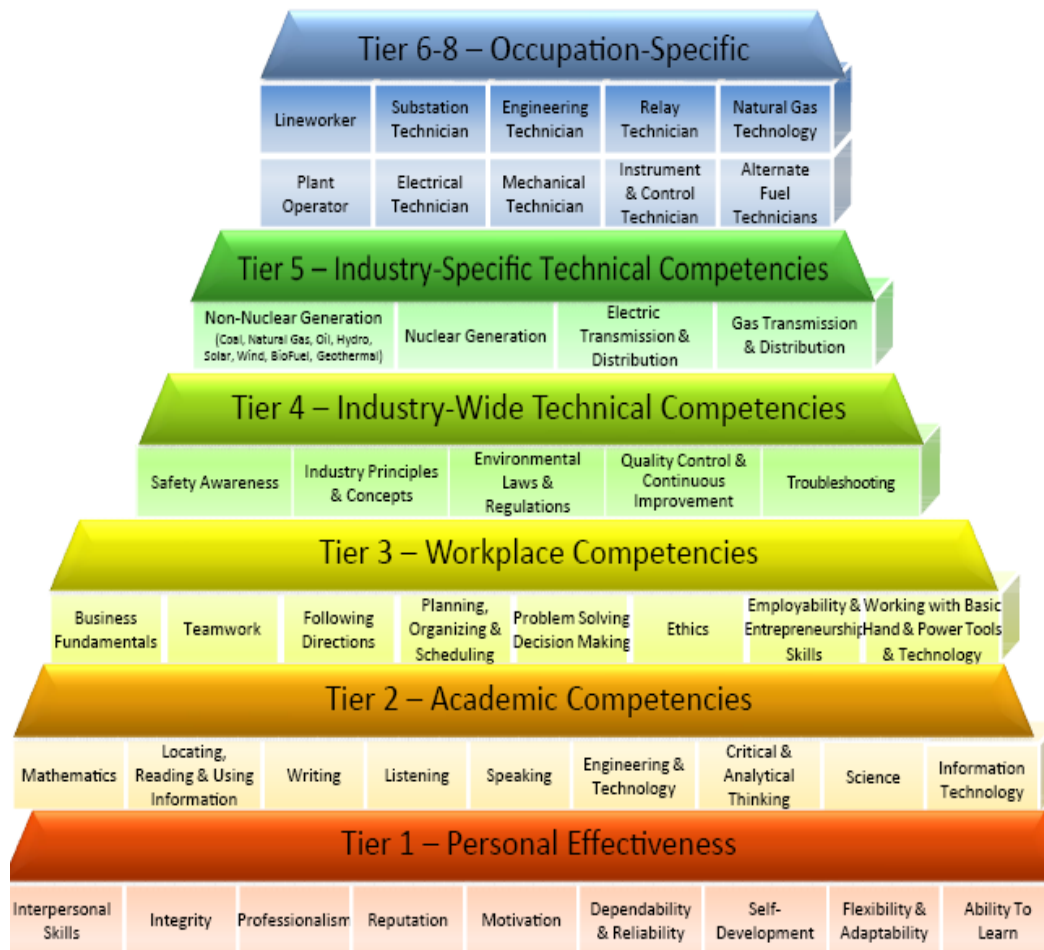


# TANF (cont.)

- Providers of home visits are sharing resources and materials from the National Resource Center with TANF participants.
- Partners are willing and able to expand healthy relationship curriculum into their services, for example:
  - One agency focused on integrating relationship education into all counties in their region by sharing information and resources with TANF workers.
  - Another collaborated with job readiness partners to include healthy relationship curriculum in job readiness classes across the state.

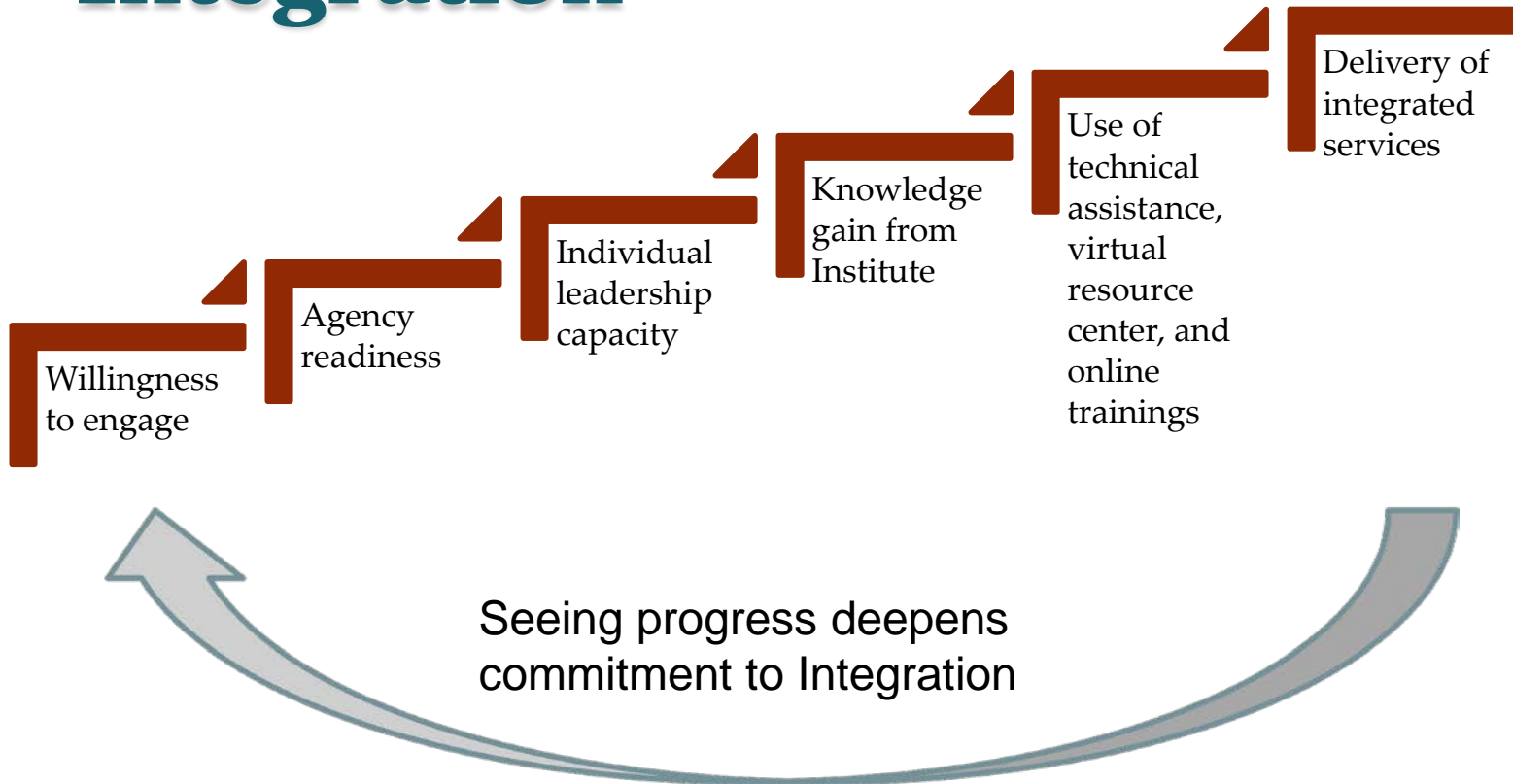


# Energy Industry Competency Model





# Building Capacity for Integration



# Summary of Results

- Integration efforts occurred most often within agencies using more than one service delivery method.
- Participants of Integration Institutes who are directly involved in economic self-sufficiency services most frequently reported “basic engagement” (Level 1) or “partnerships” (Level 2) as their primary method of integration.
- Working collaboratively with agency leadership as well as partners and other agencies (Level 2) was key to integration of relationship education into existing services, such as home visits and classes.



# What's Next?

- Another series of six Institutes with lessons learned incorporated
- Focus groups with previous participants
- Expanded Follow-up calls to include 45 day, 90 day, 6 months and one year

