Evidence of Effectiveness for PREP’s Curriculum

*Within My Reach™* designed for Individuals

*Language from the ACF FOA: HHS-2011-ACF-OFA-FM-0193:*

**Evidence of Effectiveness** Applicants are encouraged to state in their application where appropriate what curriculum they will use for skills-based healthy marriage, or responsible parenting education, or the comprehensive economic stability services.

Further, applicants are encouraged to justify their choice based on the target population that they propose to serve. Applicants are not required to meet a minimum of curriculum hours, but should demonstrate how the number of hours identified will effectively accomplish program goals. Applicants may be creative in designing the service delivery approach.

**Applicants are strongly encouraged to describe the extent to which the proposed approaches (for each program component) are based on some evidence of effectiveness.** For example, the proposed approach may incorporate specific curriculum or core curriculum content that has been shown to be effective in positively affecting outcomes of interest to applicant (e.g., employment success, parent-child interactions, quality of the relationship between parents) for some population groups. The applicants should describe any proposed adaptations from the original evidence and the applicant's rationale for the adaptations (e.g., practice exercises framed in life experiences of lower-income individuals and families; activities tailored to address low education levels; added content on complex family relationships; relevant for different ethnic/racial population; employment services tailored to individuals with greater barriers to employment or revised based on high in demand industries in the community, etc.).

**What you can write about Within My Reach regarding empirical evidence.**

You may use any or all of the text below as desired in your application. (We are not making a recommendation regarding which specific text nor the amount of information to include in your application. We are providing information which you may (or may not) find useful.)

*Within My Reach* is a research-based curriculum in the tradition and style of PREP, with the same development team behind it. PREP curricula like *PREP 7.0* & *Within Our Reach* (for couples), *Within My Reach* (for individuals) and *On My Shoulders* (for fathers) are founded on best practices, including having strategies that are empirically informed, being empirically tested in outcome studies, and are regularly refined based on new scientific knowledge in the field of research on relationships.

*Within My Reach* (WMR) was built for individuals whether or not they are
currently in a relationship, and it was optimized for single parents at low income levels. It does not assume that there is an existing, committed relationship that the participant definitely wants to stay in or that any relationship they are in already is healthy and safe. In addition to classic strategies from PREP (e.g., skills in communication, conflict management, a model for managing expectations), a big focus of *WMR* is on making good choices in romantic relationships that are safe and healthy for adults and their children. There is considerable information on safety developed with input from national domestic violence experts.

*WMR* was built with those at lower incomes in mind by careful consideration of both research and community experiences. Numerous case workers and experts who work extensively with those receiving government aid were involved in its development. Further, it was piloted in actual TANF and TANF like environments. This process included a lot of testing and feedback from participants as well from those working with them in the community. In many other ways, including lesson content and group activities, WMR is a major adaptation of PREP with individuals at lower incomes in mind.

**Brief Overview of Research Background**

- PREP (and variations of it) has been evaluated in more long-term studies by more research teams than any relationship education curriculum in the history of this field (see Markman & Rhoades, in press, for a review).

- PREP curricula are the only marriage/relationship education interventions listed in the National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (SAMHSA’s NREPP). Programs have to meet rigorous standards of evidence to be listed by NREPP and PREP, *Within Our Reach*, and *Within My Reach* are all included. ([http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=147](http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=147))

**Specific studies that have tested the effectiveness of *Within My Reach***

Antle and colleagues (in press) carried out the first quantitative study on the effectiveness of *Within My Reach*. In this study, 202 individuals (76.7% women) took part in *Within My Reach* at a neighborhood center. They completed a pre-program assessment, post-program assessment, and six month follow-up. Satisfaction with the program was high, with a mean of 4.46 on 5-point scale. Additionally, participants showed significant increases in knowledge about relationship skills, as measured by a scale developed for this study. Finally, the results indicated significant, positive change from pre to follow-up on communication quality and conflict management, as well as a trend toward a reduction in relationship aggression. The effect of the program on the reduction of aggression is significant at the one-year follow-up (Becky Antle, personal
Within My Reach is thoroughly appropriate for use with low income participants. A qualitative study on use of Within My Reach with TANF recipients was funded by the National Poverty Center. This study examined the fit between this curriculum and the needs and interests of individuals receiving government assistance (Sparks, 2008). Participants in that study were women who had children and whose income was below the poverty line. This investigation demonstrated a good fit between the content topics and the audience’s relationship situations and concerns. Further, in follow-up interviews, all study participants reported finding the content valuable and most of them could describe instances in which they had used the new information they learned.

It is also worth noting that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has funded a violence prevention study using Within My Reach as part of the David Olds’ and colleagues’ Nurse-Family Partnership Model (see Niolon et al. (2009) for a description). In that study, Within My Reach is delivered as a part of a larger program delivered in home visits by nurses to pregnant women with low-income levels. No outcome data have been published from that project, but the investigator reports that it has been very well received by the mothers being visited by public health nurses (Lynette Feder, personal communication, February, 2009).

Lastly, there existed a strong body of literature on the effectiveness of relationship education delivered to couples, some of which provides evidence that this kind of relationship education delivered to just one partner will be effective. For example, we know from many previous studies that couples improve in their relationships when they are taught the same communication skills that individuals learn in Within My Reach. As a recent example, a study conducted with U.S. Army couples showed that receiving the same communication skills training (from PREP) was associated with significantly better conflict management at the post-intervention assessment (Allen et al., in press) and lower rates of divorce at a one-year follow-up (Stanley et al., 2010).


**Evaluation Studies of PREP: Peer Reviewed, Published Papers on the Efficacy and Effectiveness of PREP**
In all but one of these studies, there was evidence of gains in relationship quality or functioning for couples taking a variation of PREP.

Allen, E. S., Stanley, S., Markman, H., Rhoades, G., & Loew, B. (in press) Marriage Education in the Army: Results of a Randomized Clinical Trial. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy.*


**A Large-Scale Government Trial of Relationship Education and Support Programs for Low Income Couples** (The citation below presents evidence of positive impacts for a variation of PREP used in the large study. It is a government publication rather than a peer reviewed journal publication.)


**Papers on Best Practices in the Field by Scholars Associated with PREP**


