Evidence of Effectiveness for PREP’s Curriculum

Within OUR Reach™ designed for Couples

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, and 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 say about Within Our Reach/PREP regarding empirical evidence

You may use any of the text in this document 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.)

Research Background for Within Our Reach and PREP

PREP produces two major curricula for couples: PREP 7.0 and Within Our Reach (WOR). PREP 7.0 is the original curriculum. WOR is fundamentally PREP—adapted specifically for couples with lower income levels. Given their similarity, the research basis for the two is essentially identical. WOR was built with couples at lower incomes in mind by careful consideration of both research and community experiences. This has included a lot of testing and feedback from couples at lower incomes as well from those working with them in the community. For example, there is material on stress management. There is an emphasis on community connections. There is material designed to help people think more about how their
past may be impacting their present, and how to share those things with their partner. In many other ways, including lesson content and group activities, WOR is a major adaptation of PREP with couples at lower incomes in mind.

In the rest of this document, when we refer to research on PREP, we mean research on any of the major derivations of the PREP family of curricula for couples, which includes Within Our Reach and PREP 7.0.

PREP curricula are founded on best practices, including strategies that are empirically informed, currently being empirically tested in outcome studies, and are regularly refined based on new scientific knowledge in the field of research on relationships.

In addition to general community use, PREP-related programs have been used and evaluated in low-income community settings, faith communities, the military, correctional settings, and foster care programs and so forth. PREP has also been used extensively as a premarital preparation program.

**Brief Overview of Research Background**

- *PREP* (and each curriculum born of PREP) 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. (See: [http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=147](http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=147))

- In many peer-reviewed, published outcome studies, couples receiving PREP have demonstrated benefits on a variety of dimensions, especially in communication quality and conflict management, but also on other dimensions such as confidence in their relationships and positive connection. Recent studies that have been accepted for publication also show positive impacts on variables such as father involvement, parenting, and parent-rated child outcomes.

- Four published outcome studies show that couples who took PREP had a lower rate of divorce or break-up at follow-ups one to five years later compared to those not taking PREP. To our knowledge, these are the only controlled evaluations in the field to show impacts on relationship stability from relationship education approaches.

**Sample Text Describing Evidence Basis for PREP/WOR (full citations are included in the next section)**

Use or adapt as desired.
Within Our Reach is a curricula adapted from PREP for couples with low income levels. PREP is thoroughly evidence based as well as continually updated and informed by ongoing outcome research and basic science studies in the relationship field. In fact, variations of PREP have been evaluated in more long-term studies (and by more researchers) than any curricula in the history of the marriage and relationship education (MRE) field (e.g., Halford et al., 2001; Hahlweg et al., 1998; Markman et al., 1993; Laurenceau et al., 2004; Stanley et al., 2010; Wood et al., 2010). Across these (and other outcome studies on variations of PREP), couples receiving some form of PREP have demonstrated benefits on a variety of dimensions, especially in communication quality and conflict management, but also on other dimensions such as confidence in their relationships and positive connection. Further, every experimental study in the field that shows that couples are less likely to breakup or divorce for some period of time following MRE is a study using a variation of PREP (Devaney & Dion, 2010; Hahlweg et al., 1998; Markman et al., 1993; Stanley et al., 2010). New studies also contain promising findings of positive impacts on variables such as father involvement, parenting, and ratings of child outcomes (Rienks et al., in press; Wadsworth et al., in press).

As a result of the evidence supporting PREP, PREP is listed in the U. S. Government’s SAMHSA National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP). In fact, PREP curricula are the only marriage/relationship education interventions 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. (See: http://nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=147)

Citations for 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.]


A Large-Scale Government Trial of Relationship Education and Support Programs to Couples at Lower-Income Levels (The citation below presents evidence of many positive impacts for a variation of PREP used in this large and rigorous study. It is a government publication rather than a peer reviewed journal publication. Of eight test sites in this large government study, the only site to get positive impacts was Oklahoma’s Family Expectations Program. That program used creative methods to reduce barriers for couples and was the only site in the study to use a variation of PREP. For a presentation of the positive results in Oklahoma, see the citation below.)


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


