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Qualitative study on use of Within My Reach with TANF recipients, 2008

ABSTRACT

Through the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative and Oklahoma’s Department of Human Services, a relationship education program called Within My Reach is included in a week of orientation activities for new TANF (public assistance) clients. An implementation study was conducted with the aims: 1) of providing an in-depth description of the program based on the researcher’s observations; 2) of assessing, through in-depth interviews, the fit between the curriculum and the TANF clients’ actual relationship situations and concerns; and 3) of assessing, through repeated interviews, the degree to which participants utilize skills taught in the program. The researcher observed Within My Reach classes in three Department of Human Services centers in the greater Oklahoma City area and interviewed twenty-two TANF clients who participated in the Within My Reach program. Analysis of interviews and field notes from observation of classes found that a good fit existed between topics covered in the curriculum and the TANF clients’ actual relationship situations and concerns. Analysis of post-completion interviews with eleven participants revealed that all eleven found at least one concept in the program valuable; nine of the eleven described one or more ways in which they had utilized awareness or skill they had gained from the program. The findings suggest that Within My Reach successfully modifies and adapts core elements of PREP (an effective relationship education program for middle class engaged and married couples) in order to address issues experienced by low income single parents.