



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
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AFRICAN AMERICAN HEALTHY MARRIAGE INITIATIVE (AAHMI)

A component of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Healthy Marriage Initiative, the **African American Healthy Marriage Initiative (AAHMI)** more specifically promotes a culturally competent strategy for fostering healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood, improving child well-being and strengthening families within the African American community. To move the initiative forward, the AAHMI has a three-pronged strategy:

- **Education and Communication** with the African American community through the use of forums, high profile endorsements, and the dissemination of information;
- **Enhancement of Partnerships** by enlisting the support of African American media, African American faith- and community-based organizations, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and African American civic, public and non-traditional organizations,
- **Facilitating Access to Community and ACF Resources** by building capacity in the African American community to deliver marriage education services.

The **AAHMI Roundtable met in Washington DC on August 1, 2003**, convening a group of professionals and practitioners serving the African American community. This Roundtable crafted the mission statement of the AAHMI: “To promote and strengthen the institution of healthy marriage in the African American community.”

The AAHMI Roundtable provided a blueprint for the Initiative in its earliest stages, and the subsequent AAHMI Forums and Events have provided an arena for a national public dialogue on a number of issues pertinent to African American healthy marriage. Additionally, the Forums have served as community outreach efforts, leaving behind in each host city a burgeoning community healthy marriage coalition.

- **Atlanta AAHMI Forum – “Strengthening Families, Youth Making Healthy Choices”**
Held at the Morehouse College of Medicine in November 2003, the first AAHMI Forum provided a special venue for creative discussion on how the AAHMI relates to African American youth. The Forum included workshops on subjects including healthy relationships, marriage education, research and applied practices, and model practices for Community Healthy Marriage programs. Several sessions were designed to promote intergenerational dialogue among participants, including the premier of “Jump the Broom,” an educational play and discussion around African American Marriage that has since been featured at a wide variety of events, including subsequent AAHMI forums.



- **Dallas AAHMI Forum – “Why Marriage Matters: The Role of Business and the Media”** Held in January 2004, the Dallas Forum featured prominent business and media leaders speaking on the use of the media in promoting healthy marriage. Speakers discussed how media can enhance programming at the community level, as well as further the goals of the AAHMI via mass communication.
- **Chicago AAHMI Forum – “Why Marriage Matters: The Role of Faith-Based and Community Organizations”** Held at the University of Illinois in May 2004, the Chicago Forum focused on identifying the needs and resources of clergy and community faith leaders and private foundations to promote healthy marriage services.
- **Los Angeles AAHMI Forum – “African American Healthy Marriage: What’s Hip Hop Got to Do with It?”** Held in September 2004 at the Davidson Executive Center on the campus of the University of Southern California, the Los Angeles Forum created a dialogue among youth, adults, and service providers, all working to mobilize youth involved with Hip Hop culture to educate their peers about making healthy choices and establishing healthy relationships that strengthen families.
- **New Orleans – “Healthy Marriage Curricula Institute”** Held in April 2005, the New Orleans event convened a group of marriage educators and practitioners to identify and explore some of the critical and essential elements of a culturally competent curriculum to address the unique needs of the African American population.
- **Rome, Georgia – “Framing the Future: A Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage Forum”** Held in May 2005 at the Winshape Retreat Center located at Berry College, this Forum created an important dialogue between healthy marriage and fatherhood leaders. Participants explored the challenges and opportunities in building a strong Fatherhood – Healthy Marriage partnership for the purposes of building stronger children, families and communities.
- **Detroit AAHMI Mini-Academy – “African American Mini-Academy: From Dialogue to Service Delivery”** Held in June 2005, the Detroit mini-academy provided an opportunity for selected AAHMI community coalitions that are delivering healthy marriage services to receive targeted technical assistance. Each team developed an action plan that addressed identified challenges and incorporated implementation strategies that will lead to strengthening their healthy marriage programs.
- **Washington, DC AAHMI Mini-Academy - “African American Mini-Academy: From Dialogue to Service Delivery”** Held in August 2005, the DC mini-academy provided an opportunity for selected AAHMI community coalitions that are delivering healthy marriage services to receive targeted technical assistance. Each team developed an action plan that addressed identified challenges and incorporated implementation strategies that will lead to strengthening their healthy marriage programs.



- **Atlanta AAHMI Youth Roundtable, Mini-Academy, and Youth Forum** - Held in May 2006, these three consecutive events provided an opportunity for youth to voice their ideas and concerns about healthy relationships and healthy marriage; and the opportunity for selected AAHMI sites that are delivering healthy marriage services to receive targeted technical assistance on how to incorporate a youth driven strategy into existing programs. The AAHMI emphasized a strong focus on hearing from youth and editing action plans for individual programs.
- **Houston AAHMI Youth Roundtable, Mini-Academy, and Youth Forum** - Held in June 2006, these three consecutive events provided an opportunity for youth to voice their ideas and concerns about healthy relationships and healthy marriage; and the opportunity for selected AAHMI sites that are delivering healthy marriage services to receive targeted technical assistance on how to incorporate a youth driven strategy into existing programs. The AAHMI emphasized a strong focus on hearing from youth and editing action plans for individual programs.
- **Chapel Hill, North Carolina - AAHMI Connecting Marriage Research to Practice Conference** – Held in September 2006 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill William and Ida Friday Center for Continuing Education, this research conference brought together a diverse group of scholars, practitioners, faith and community-based organizations, healthy marriage coalitions, and experts to explore and discuss the available and emerging field of research regarding the African American family experience; and the implications of those research findings to sustaining and strengthening African American families and marriages.

For more information on the African American Healthy Marriage Initiative, go to:

http://www.acf.hhs.gov/healthymarriage/aa_hmi/AAHMI.html

