



Marriage Education Initiatives

Friday, January 27, 2006

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch will be served

Rayburn House Office Building, Room B-318
Washington, DC 20515

The Brookings Institution, in cooperation with the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development in Baltimore and the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, will hold a forum on marriage education programs. This forum builds on research published in the Fall 2005 issue of *The Future of Children*, “Marriage and Child Wellbeing,” published by Brookings and Princeton University. The forum will feature staff who run marriage education programs in Baltimore and Oklahoma as well as couples who have participated in the two programs. Baltimore is one of the sites for the Building Strong Families research initiative sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services. The Oklahoma Marriage Initiative is known as one of the most comprehensive marriage programs in the nation.

Congress is poised to authorize \$100 million per year for programs to encourage marriage. Research shows that the rise of female-headed families—especially those created through non-marital births—is a major cause of child poverty. If marriage rates could be increased, poverty would decline and child well-being would be enhanced. But can marriage rates be increased? Most existing marriage education programs, with content differing from program to program, work with five to eight couples in weekly sessions that feature discussions and exercises to build trust, improve communication, create rules for resolving conflict and disagreement, and build competent parenting practices.

The forum will discuss the content of several marriage education programs, from the perspectives of program operators, participants, and researchers. Following their remarks, the panel and presenters will take questions from the audience.

Welcome and Introduction

RON HASKINS, Senior Fellow and Co-Director of the Center on Children and Families, Brookings Institution

Overview of “Loving Couples, Loving Children” Marriage Education Curriculum

JULIE GOTTMAN, Co-Founder and Clinical Director, Gottman Institute
(featuring a video of marriage education sessions)

Panel Discussion: Marriage Education Professionals and Participants

Moderator: JOE JONES, President, Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development
WILLIE BARBER, Group Facilitator, Baltimore Building Strong Families Program
STEPHEN LAWRENCE, Family Coordinator, Baltimore Building Strong Families Program
TERRY BROWN and NAKIA STATON, Participants in the Baltimore Building Strong Families Program
PETRA HUTCHISON, Family Coordinator, Oklahoma Marriage Initiative
GREG MITCHELL and TABITHA CATES, Participants in the Oklahoma Marriage Initiative

Please RSVP to ccf@brookings.edu by Friday, January 20, 2006.

For more information, please contact Andy Yarrow at (202) 797-6483.