

UTAH MARRIAGE COMMISSION

The mission of the Utah Marriage Commission is to help people form and sustain healthy and enduring marriages and relationships.
The Commission promotes and supports marriage and relationship education services, with a special focus on serving populations at higher risk for family instability.

Brief History: The Utah Marriage Commission began in 1998 as part of the Governor's office. It was placed in the Department of Workforce Services in 2004. In 2013, it was formally put in statute and transferred to the Department of Human Services. The Commission's work has been supported with TANF funds. A major purpose of TANF is to increase the number of children growing up in stable, healthy, two-parent families. The Commission is directed by a group of volunteer experts appointed by the Governor. It has one part-timer staffer.

Utah Marriage Commission Services Highlights

Note: Currently, Commission-funded educational services are concentrated primarily in Weber, Utah, and Washington Counties. Utah State University Cooperative Extension provides some services to several other counties across the state. The Commission also promotes the general practice of relationship education in Utah.

FY 2015 (Appropriation = \$300,000)

- 2,292 individuals received (face-to-face) educational services

FY 2016 Mid-year (Appropriation = \$300,000)

- 819 individuals received (face-to-face) educational services

Current Web and Social Media Presence

- 3,706 followers on Facebook
- 4,750 followers on Twitter
- 8,456 followers on social media (Twitter, Facebook)
- Steady growth
- Official website: StrongerMarriage.org

Some Educational Service Partners/Venues

- Mountainland Head Start/ Ogden Weber Community Action Partnership
- Safe Harbor Domestic Violence Shelter/ Your Community Connection Domestic Violence Shelter
- Catholic Community Services of Northern Utah
- Ogden-Weber Applied Technology Center
- Community Education Center at Weber State University
- Davis County Behavioral Health
- Alpine School District

FY 2017 Plans (Requested Appropriation = \$300,000)

- Continue to support effective relationship education services, with concentrations in Weber, Utah, and Washington Counties.
- Increase investment in premarital education by Utah engaged couples, including:
 - offering a free voucher to engaged couples to take the online PREP (ePREP) program, the premier evidence-based relationship program in the world.
 - About 24,000 marriages a year in Utah
- Increase brief, online relationship enhancement options.
- Improve regular reporting of performance measures of educational services.

Evaluation of Services

- The Commission supports research-based and evidence-based relationship education curricula (e.g., “How to Avoid Falling in Love with a Jerk/Jerkette,” “Within Our Reach”).
- Ongoing program evaluation of relationship education classes in Weber County shows significant, positive learning impacts on participants at completion of services.
- Extensive program evaluation work since 2007 by USU Cooperative Extension shows significant, positive gains in relationship skills and relationship quality among participants.
- Based on a model from a national study,¹ we estimate that the funds invested in Commission services between 2005-2010:
 - reduced the percentage of children born to single-parent families by 3% (over what would have been the case without the investment of these funds);
 - increased the percentage of children born to married, two-parent families by nearly 6%.
- Note: All educational services have a domestic violence protocol to recognize and deal with DV; nearly all curricula have instruction on healthy relationships, safety, effective problem-solving, and avoiding aggressive, violent, abusive behavior.

¹ Hawkins, A. J., Amato, P. R., & Kinghorn, A. (2013). Are Government-Supported Healthy Marriage Initiatives Affecting Family Demographics? A State-Level Analysis. *Family Relations*, 62, 501-513.