

Mississippi Healthy Marriage Initiative

“Developing strong couples and healthy children in Mississippi”

The Mississippi Healthy Marriage Initiative is a collaboration of community organizations, agencies, groups and individuals in recognition and support of the following:

Problem:

Mississippi ranks 50th out of 50 regarding overall child wellbeing, much of which can be attributed to the breakdown of the traditional two-parent family.

- 45% of children in Mississippi are in single-parent households, the highest percentage in the nation.
 - Seven percent are in father-only households, and 38% are in mother-only households.
- 55% of children in Mississippi live in a married-couple household.
- Mississippi is the 3rd highest of 50 states for births to unmarried women. 48.3% of the births in Mississippi are out of wedlock, preceded only by New Mexico and Louisiana.
- Mississippi has the highest rate of teen mothers (ages 15-19) in the country: 121 per 1,000
- 31% of children in Mississippi live in poverty (highest in the nation).
 - In Mississippi, 9% of married-couple families with related children are below poverty compared to 46% of single-parent families with related children that are below poverty.

Mission:

In an effort to reverse the trend of destructive relationships and to strengthen the infrastructure of our communities and State, the mission of the Mississippi Healthy Marriage Initiative (MHMI) is to:

- Educate single adults to promote healthy relationship decisions
- Advocate for a strong, healthy, life-long marriage (between a man and a woman)
- Promote both mothers and fathers to be active in the lives of their children
- Work to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- Enable families throughout Mississippi to have greater access to Marriage Education and Relationship Skills Training programs that equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to form and sustain healthy marriages and families.

Goals:

- Decrease divorce rates
- Increase marital satisfaction and stability
- Increase the number of children living in a two-parent married household
- Decrease the number of out-of-wedlock births
- Increase child well-being

- Increase the quantity and quality of relationship education programs available to individuals, couples, and families in Mississippi

Actions:

1. To use credible research to identify significant problems facing Mississippi, emphasizing families and youth.
2. To identify solutions, implement, and subsequently measure the effectiveness of these solutions based on credible, empirical data.
3. To build broad public support for and recognition of the importance of healthy marriages and relationships.
4. To empower and equip local leaders and professionals who work with and provide services to families.