

INTRODUCTION

Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family

Each year, approximately 36 percent of all births in Michigan are to unmarried parents. In Saginaw County, almost 42 percent of births are to unmarried parents. In Oakland County, 20 percent of births countywide are to unmarried women, whereas 50 percent of births in the city of Pontiac are to unmarried women. In both counties, paternity is established in 55 to 65 percent of the births.

Research shows that paternity establishment is an important step toward securing child support payments for the care of the child, but may not lead to an involved father or a positive co-parenting relationship between the parents. This curriculum has five goals to address this situation:

1. To prepare unmarried parents to set goals to promote and create a healthy future for their children.
2. To help unmarried parents establish a positive co-parenting relationship that enables them to work together in raising their child.
3. To ensure the on-going and sustained involvement of both parents, especially the father, whenever possible in their children's lives.

4. To encourage the on-going payment of child support and provision of other forms of support by the non-custodial parent.
5. To prepare unmarried parents to make healthy decisions (with their child's best interests in mind) about their romantic and couple relationships.

This curriculum is made up of a series of 24 lessons of about 60 minutes in length. The program can be offered in a one-on-one, couple, or small group format. The curriculum is designed so that the facilitator can tailor the materials to the needs and interests of the participants and group size. The table below describes the lesson topics, objectives, and the primary goals each lesson is designed to meet.

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Module Goal	Lesson Topics	Lesson Objectives	Learning Activities
MODULE 1 To prepare unmarried parents to set goals to promote and create a healthy future for their children.	PART 1 Getting Started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the topics and activities that will be a part of the program. • Become aware of the importance of keeping a record of your personal and your children’s growth, and your family life. • Reflect on personal goals to achieve in the program. 	<i>The Yarn Network</i> <i>Mini-Lecture on an Introduction to the Program</i> <i>Creating a Memory Book</i> <i>Tell Me About You</i> <i>My Goals</i>
	PART 2 Getting Started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on the past as a step towards setting goals for a healthy family. • Create a vision for achieving one’s goals. 	<i>Looking Back Before Looking Forward—Zakia’s Lifeline</i> <i>My Lifeline</i>



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Module Goal	Lesson Topics	Lesson Objectives	Learning Activities
MODULE 2 To help unmarried parents establish a positive co-parenting relationship that enables them to work together in raising their child.	PART 1 Who is in My Family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify people who are part of your family. Describe the role or contribution of each family member. 	<i>What is a Family?</i> <i>My Family</i> <i>My Family Wheel</i> <i>Designing a Workbook Cover</i>
	PART 2 What is a Strong Family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe common characteristics of a strong family. Identify your family's strengths. List steps that will help your family become stronger. 	<i>Getting Started (rocks and beans demonstration)</i> <i>Strong Families Enjoy...</i> <i>John and Mary's Family</i> <i>My Family Strengths</i>
	PART 3 An Intentional Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine what is involved in being an intentional family. Take intentional steps to make one's family stronger. 	<i>An Intentional Family</i> <i>Workbook Scrapbook Activity</i> <i>Family Fun Box</i>
	PART 4 Parenting Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the term "co-parenting." Describe the benefits of a positive co-parenting relationship for children. Increase parents' commitment to work together in parenting their children. 	<i>Mini-Lesson on Co-Parenting</i> <i>Ten Tips for Co-Parenting</i> <i>My Hopes and Dreams for My Child</i> <i>Optional: My Co-Parenting Commitment</i>
	PART 5 Fathers and Mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the importance of fathers and mothers. Discuss ways to better involve both parents in a child's life. 	<i>Mini-Lecture on Mothers and Fathers</i> <i>What Mothers and Father Do</i> <i>My Family's Movie</i>

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Module Goal	Lesson Topics	Lesson Objectives	Learning Activities
MODULE 3 To ensure the on-going and sustained involvement of both parents, especially the father, wherever possible in their children's lives.	PART 1 Building Friendships: Positive Strokes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the importance of positive strokes for one's self-esteem and for building relationships with others. Identify examples of positive strokes. Experience the effects of giving and receiving positive strokes. 	<i>The Human Knot</i> <i>Mini-Lecture on Positive Strokes</i> <i>Examples of Positive Strokes</i> <i>Practice Giving Strokes</i>
	PART 2 Building Friendships: Avoiding Discounting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the relationship between stress and discounting. Understand what discounting is and how it relates to stress in relationships. Plan action steps to change discounting of self and others. 	<i>Draw a Picture of Oneself Under Stress</i> <i>Discounting</i> <i>Lavonda's Bad Day</i> <i>Action Planning for Positive Strokes and Avoiding Discounting</i>
	PART 3 Building Friendships: Listening Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become aware of the importance of good listening skills. Describe the key elements of active listening. Practice active listening techniques. 	<i>Learning to Listen</i> <i>Mini-Lecture on Active Listening</i> <i>Active Listening Exercise</i>
	PART 4 Listening to Face, Voice, and Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn to understand and listen to non-verbal messages. Describe the process of defensive listening. Practice strategies for defensive listening and positive start-ups in conversations. 	<i>Mini-Lecture on Listening and Defensive Listening</i> <i>Strategies for Active Listening</i> <i>Watch Your Start Up</i>



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MODULE 3 (continued) To ensure the on-going and sustained involvement of both parents, especially the father, wherever possible in their children's lives.	PART 5 Managing My Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify physical and emotional signs and symptoms of stress in oneself. Assess personal stress management strategies. Describe three new stress management strategies to try. 	<i>Optional Activity: Sources of Stress</i> <i>Signs of Stress</i> <i>How Well Do I Manage Stress?</i>
	PART 6 Managing Conflict: Escalating and De-Escalating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define conflict in co-parenting relationships. Identify one's role in patterns of conflict. Raise awareness of unhealthy patterns of communication during conflict. 	<i>Mini-Lecture on Conflict</i> <i>What is your Conflict Communication Style?</i> <i>W.I.N. Scripts</i> <i>Resolving Conflict through Assertive Communication</i>
MODULE 4 To encourage the on-going payment of child support and provision of other forms of support by the non-custodial parent.	PART 1 What a Child Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the costs of raising a child to adulthood. Examine the personal financial costs of parenting one's children. 	<i>What Does it Cost to Raise a Child?</i> <i>What Families Spend on Children Each Year</i> <i>Tracking your Spending on your Child or Children</i>
	PART 2 Obtaining Child Support for your Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the importance of paying child support regularly. Make a commitment to one's child to sustain regular payment of child support. 	<i>Mini-Lecture on the Importance of Child Support</i> <i>Pros and Cons of Child Support</i> <i>A Letter of Commitment to Child</i>

Module 4 summary continued on next page.

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Module Goal	Lesson Topics	Lesson Objectives	Learning Activities
MODULE 4 (continued) To encourage the on-going payment of child support and provision of other forms of support by the non-custodial parent.	PART 3 Overcoming the Barriers to Paying Child Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the perspectives of unmarried fathers and mothers. • Identify the effects of these perspectives on child support. • Take two steps to improve the situation with one's co-parent. 	<i>Mini-Lecture—What Do Men Say About Being Fathers and Paying Child Support?</i> <i>What Mothers Say about the Role of Fathers and Paying Child Support</i> <i>Getting Over the Barriers</i>
	PART 4 Making the Most of Parenting Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the relationship between child support and parenting time. • Identify the barriers to parenting time. • Discuss a plan for negotiating parenting time. 	<i>Felix and Maria</i> <i>Planning Parenting Time</i> <i>Developing a Plan for Parenting Time</i>
	PART 5 The Way I Manage Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize how managing one's money affects one's ability to be responsible for the children and their needs. • Explain the importance of organizing important papers. • Take steps to start tracking expenses and spending. 	<i>The Ways I Spend Money</i> <i>Organize, Track, and Pay Your Bills</i> <i>Finding your Important Papers</i>
	PART 6 Tracking Expenses and Paying Bills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess personal spending patterns. • Describe the differences between wants and needs. • Develop a plan for paying one's bills • Identify parenting time activities that cost little or no money. 	<i>Track your Income and Expenses</i> <i>Needs and Wants</i> <i>Paying your Bills</i>



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MODULE 5 To prepare unmarried parents to make healthy decisions (with their child's best interests in mind) about their romantic and couple relationships.	PART 1 A Healthy Marriage Is Good for your Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the health benefits of a healthy marriage. Describe the characteristics of a healthy marriage. Identify one issue that if improved will move participant closer to a healthy marriage. 	<i>Mini-Lecture on The Benefits of a Healthy Marriage</i> <i>Mini-Lecture on What Makes for a Healthy Marriage</i> <i>Problem-Solving: Steps Toward a Healthy Marriage</i>
	PART 2 What Are the Barriers to a Healthy Marriage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine barriers to a healthy marriage. Identify the characteristics of a healthy marriage. Assess the impact of an unhealthy marriage on children. 	<i>What Is a Healthy Marriage?</i> <i>Diane and Kevin Case Study (identify strengths of a healthy marriage)</i> <i>Mini-Lecture on Characteristics of a Healthy Marriage</i> <i>Importance of Healthy Marriages for Children</i>
	PART 3 Is Marriage in Our Future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess quality of relationship with the child's other parent. Decide on the future of the relationship with one's co-parent or current partner. 	<i>My Relationship History</i> <i>Red Flags, Yellow Flags</i> <i>Characteristics of a Strong Marriage</i> <i>Focusing on the person I want to Marry</i> <i>More Focus</i> <i>What are My Choices?</i>
	PART 4 Becoming a Step Parent and Step Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the challenges of forming a step family Describe strategies for supporting step family formation 	<i>Mini-Lecture on Step Families</i> <i>Rules to guide Step Families</i> <i>Becoming a Step Family: Questions to Discuss</i>

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MODULE 6 Reinforce skills acquired over the previous sessions, pull ideas together and formulate a plan for child's future.	Planning the Rest of the Trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a positive vision for one's children and steps to take towards it.• Celebrate the learning and successes from participating in the program.	<i>Plan for the Future</i> <i>18 Years from Now...</i>

