

History

Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family



The creation of the *Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family* was based on three curricula developed by Francesca Adler-Baeder at Auburn University and Karen Shirer at the University of Minnesota (while at Michigan State University). Below is a brief description of the each curriculum and its contribution to this product.

Caring for My Family: Encouraging Family Formation and Father Involvement was originally developed in 2002 by a team at Michigan State University led by Karen Shirer (other team members included Mark Harden, Dawn Contreras, Jodi Spicer, and Linda Hanson). The Michigan Department

of Human Services provided funding to develop the curriculum for their county offices to use in supporting family formation and father involvement among unmarried new mothers receiving cash assistance. In 2003, Francesca Adler-Baeder at Auburn University evaluated the curriculum implementation and effects at four sites in Alabama through the Family Connections project. In 2004, MSU conducted a pilot study of the curriculum. The findings from these studies were used to inform curricular revisions. The full curriculum can be found at URL: www.fcs.msue.msu.edu/cfmf/.

In 2004, Dr. Adler-Baeder, developed the *Building Healthy Relationships curriculum for Extension Agents* in her state. The seven-session curriculum was derived from the *Caring for my Family* curriculum and the *Smart Steps* curriculum. *The Family Connections in Alabama* project had found that many participants in the program were dealing with step family issues. Learning activities from *Smart Steps* (developed by Francesca Adler-Baeder) were integrated into the original CFMF curriculum. In addition, the topics in CFMF were re-arranged to provide learning activities on resolving conflict earlier in the program. More information can be found at <http://www.stepfamilies.info/about.php>.

In 2004, Karen Shirer and Francesca Adler-Baeder worked on a team that developed educational materials for a healthy marriage project at the

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federal level. The curriculum titled *Together We Can: Manage Stress and Toxic Feelings* was developed by Dr. Adler-Baeder and Dr. Shirer as well as Dr. Charlotte Shoup Olsen at Kansas State University. The curriculum helps participants explore stress and how couples can work together as a “team” to manage the stress in their lives. Participants focus on the regulation of strong, negative emotions, including how patterns of emotion regulation develop, and how couples interact during the process of emotion regulation in ways that are either helpful to the process or potentially destructive to the relationship. For more information please contact Karen Shirer, Ph.D., Capacity Area Leader, Family Development and Associate Dean for Extension University of Minnesota Extension, 32 McNeal Hall, 1985 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108-6142, Email: shire008@umn.edu, Phone: 612-626-3971.

In addition, other resources were used to inform the development of modules and lessons on child support, money management, marriage and health, and co-parenting. These resources are referenced in the lessons where they are used.

