TARGET AUDIENCE
This program is for couples who are unmarried or remarried and their children, 6 to 17 years old, who are living as stepfamilies.

SUMMARY
Smart Steps: Embrace the Journey (Smart Steps), community-based program for stepfamilies, is designed to teach relationship building skills to enhance couple, parent-child, and stepparent-child relationships.

EVIDENCE
A pre-test post-test evaluation of Smart Steps, with no comparison group, found a significant increase in commitment to one’s spouse/partner among participants who completed the program and attended the optional booster session. Additionally, there were significant increases in agreement with spouse/partner on parenting, finances, and dealing with ex-partners. These results were found for women and men, Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino participants, and married and unmarried couples. A quasi-experimental study in a racially diverse sample of participants who were in unstable relationships found significant increases in individual empowerment, couple quality, family harmony, and parenting efficacy for the treatment group, from pre-test to post-test, compared to the control group.

COMPONENTS
The Smart Steps program utilizes presentations, group discussions, hands-on activities, and multi-media resources to teach skills to stepfamilies to help them strengthen their relationships. Program topics include the following:

- Identify stages of stepfamily development;
- Address myths about stepfamilies;
- Explore legal and financial issues within stepfamilies;
- Build respectful and empathetic relationships;
- Understand child development;
- Define roles and rules;
- Communicate truthfully and clearly and cope with conflict;
- Create realistic expectations;
- Manage stress; and
- Care for the couple relationship.

Parents and children meet separately and then come together for joint family activities.

PREVIOUS USE
Since 2002, over 1,500 stepfamilies in Alabama and Utah, including stepfamilies on Hill Air Force Base, have participated in the Smart Steps program. The program has also been implemented in many other states, and over 1,600 human service professionals have received training in the Smart Steps curriculum.
Smart Steps: Embrace the Journey (Smart Steps)

TRAINING

This program is implemented by human service professionals. Information on training for the facilitators was unavailable. Please contact the National Stepfamily Resource Center using information listed below.

CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations for implementing this program include obtaining qualified human service professionals to be facilitators, acquiring meeting space, recruiting stepfamilies for participation and acquiring their buy-in and commitment, and providing childcare for youth who are too young to attend (i.e., under 6 years old).

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION

If you are interested in implementing the Smart Steps program, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you!
Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

TIME

Stepfamilies participate in 6-weekly sessions that last 2 hours each and in an optional booster session 4 to 6 weeks after program completion.

COST

The Smart Steps program curriculum costs $199 and includes leader lesson guides; background readings; resource list; two videos; program vignettes; the movie, Stepmom; and a CD with power point slides, hand-outs, and evaluation questionnaires.

EVALUATION PLAN

To move the Smart Steps program to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least one experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation should be performed demonstrating positive effects lasting at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT

Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact the National Stepfamily Resource Center at www.stepfamilies.info/contact-us.php

SOURCE