



HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIP
& MARRIAGE
EDUCATION
TRAINING

www.hrmet.org

*Improving the Lives of Children Through
Healthy Couple Relationships and Stable Homes*

**Georgia
Summary Evaluation Report: 2014**



For more information about the training in Georgia, contact

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Overview of HRMET

Promoting the health and safety of children starts with a safe and stable home. Parents with healthy couple and co-parenting relationships are better able to meet the needs of their children. The *Healthy Relationship and Marriage Education Training* (HRMET) was developed, with funding from the Administration on Children, Youth and Families Children's Bureau, to prepare professionals to understand and support healthy co-parenting, couple and marital relationships for families being served in the child welfare system. This includes biological, foster, and adopting parents as well as youth. This training is also applicable to professionals who work with families and youth in other settings as well. The *theory of change* guiding the design and initial testing of this evidence-informed training is described in:

Futris, T. G., Schramm, D., Lee, T. K., Thurston, W. D., and Barton, A. W. (in press). Training child welfare professionals to support healthy couple relationships: Examining the link to training transfer. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*.

The HRMET offers research-based information and user-friendly tools to facilitate the teaching of healthy relationship skills. During this 1-day training, participants received and processed the application of tools that can help strengthen couple and family relationships. The training curriculum builds on Cooperative Extension's existing resources, including the principles and skills described in the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model. See the table below for a brief overview of the training, and visit www.nermen.org to learn more about the model and www.hrmet.org to learn more about the training.

This report summarizes the feedback shared by the professionals who completed the one-day training in *Georgia* in 2014. Trainings were promoted statewide through partnerships with state and county agencies that support families. Cooperative Extension Faculty in *Family and Consumer Sciences* from the *University of Georgia*, who contributed to the development of the training curriculum and materials, facilitated the training. More information about the training and additional resources available from UGA Cooperative Extension to support healthy couple relationships is available at www.gamarriages.org

Overview of the Training Content and Resources.

Module	Overall Objective ^a	Time (Minutes)	Resources/Tools ^b	
			CWPs	Clients
Introduction	Understand the relevance of healthy couple relationships to child welfare and what healthy RME involves.	60	4	0
Care for Self	Engage clients in cultivating individual wellness and health in order to support the health of their couple relationship	30	1	11
Choose	Support clients in making deliberate and conscientious decisions to be committed, intentional, proactive, and strengths-focused in their relationships.	45	1	7
Know	Help clients develop intimate knowledge of their partner's personal and relational needs, interests, feelings and expectations.	45	1	7
Care	Guide clients in expressing kindness, respect, and understanding to facilitate positivity and stability in their relationships.	45	1	6
Share	Demonstrate to clients the value of developing and maintaining couple time, a shared sense of couple identity, and a close friendship in healthy relationships.	60	1	8
Manage	Clarify to clients that conflict is normal in couple relationships, and share strategies to manage stress, listen to understand, accept differences, and ensure emotional and physical safety when conflict arises.	60	1	10
Connect	Help clients become better connected with their family, peers, and community as a source of support to them and their couple relationship.	30	1	4

^a Small and large group activities and discussions, along with case study scenarios, were used to engage participants and provide them with opportunities to process the concepts and skills reviewed and consider ways to apply the tools with their clients.

^b CWPs received research-based fact sheets/briefs that provided an overview of the content presented for their own reference after the training. They also received tip sheets and worksheets to share with *clients* to facilitate teaching and discussion of the concepts, principles, and skills from each module.

Outputs: Training Participants

A total of 106 professionals from 23 counties across Georgia completed the 1-day training in 2014. Trainings were conducted in Atlanta (2/26/14; n = 32), Columbus (5/13/14; n = 25), Savannah (6/13/14; n=15), and Cumming (7/15/14; n = 34). Participants represented professionals from a range of public and private agencies serving families across Georgia (see Appendix A for a listing of the various agencies represented).

Since 2011, 492 professionals across Georgia have completed the Healthy Relationship and Marriage Education Training.

This report summarizes the information shared by 87 participants (82% response rate) on a post-survey administered following the training¹. Of the 87 respondents, most learned about the training through their supervisor/director (47%) followed by a community partner (22%), an announcement (21%; e.g., website, email, listserv), a former training participant (7%), and/or other (10%; e.g., co-worker, professional association). As well, reasons for attending the training included professional growth (69%), it was recommended by their supervisor (31%) or an instructor/professor (8%), continuing education (23%), it was required (2%), and/or other (9%; e.g. “I am very interested in this topic,” “To help in my own marriage”). Also, 54 respondents (62%) reported that they attended the training with at least one co-worker (n=49) and/or their supervisor (n=13).

Based on data collected from 61 of the survey respondents, below is a general profile of the participants:

- Age: 22 to 69 (M = 45.36; SD = 12.85)
- Gender: Female (86%)
- Race: African American (45%); Caucasian (55%)
- Marital status: Married (60%); Single in a relationship (25%); Single not in a relationship (2%); Divorced/Separated (12%); Widowed (2%)
- Years in current position: less than 1 year to 30 years (M = 6.49; SD = 7.27)
- Foster or adopting parents: 5 (9%)
- Education: Some college (2%), Associate’s (9%) or Bachelor’s (26%) degree, Advanced Degree (63%)

As well, of these 61 respondents, 30 (49%) self-identified as currently working in the child welfare field. Of those who described their position (n = 58), 16 (28%) were county caseworkers, 5 (9%) supervisors/directors, or 6 (10%) administrators/staff, and 31 (53%) were “other” professionals (e.g., parent educator, trainer, therapist/counselor, program administrator or staff). To further ascertain respondents’ experience in the field and the number of families that could potentially benefit from healthy relationship education, the participants were asked to report on the number of youth and families they served in the past month.

Average number of youth and families served in the past month

	Mean	SD	Range	Sum
Number of Adolescents	14.21	15.36	0-53	540
Number of families that include a married couple	7.15	7.09	0-30	315
Number of families that include a cohabiting couple	5.50	7.70	0-39	220
Number of families that include a single-parent/caregiver	13.24	17.38	0-86	596

Note: This question was *not* asked of the participants who completed the training on 2/26/14. Responses based on n = 61.

¹ Participants from the 2/26/14 training completed a paper survey administered immediately at the conclusion of the training. As noted throughout the report, this survey did not include all of the items summarized. The remaining training participants were emailed a link to an online, updated survey the day after the training; two reminder emails were sent and surveys were closed approximately 10 days following the training date.

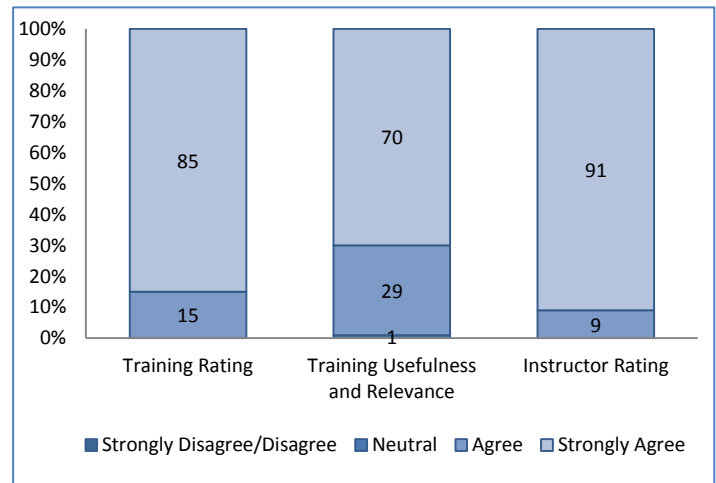
See Appendix B for more information regarding the items included on the survey and summarized in this report.

Affective Reaction: Training and Instructor Feedback

Respondents were asked to rate various aspects of the training (2 items), the usefulness and relevance of the training to their work (3 items), and their impressions of the instructor (4 items). Appendix B includes specific information for each item assessed.

As summarized in the figure, of the 87 respondents, most (99%) agreed or strongly agreed that the training met their expectations and was worthwhile, was useful and relevant to their work, and that the instructor was knowledgeable and presented material well.

When asked overall, how satisfied they were with the training, 98% indicated that they were satisfied (n=12) or very satisfied (n=72). Respondents were also asked about what they thought was most useful about the training. Primarily, respondents mentioned *tools and materials*, *level of engagement during the training*, and *personal as well as professional applicability* of the information shared (see example items below). When asked what they thought was least useful about the training, only 13 participants shared concerns or recommendations related to *time constraints* (“time constraints limited some conversation and maybe should have been two day as opposed to one”), *more engagement* (“lack of engagement activities both in the training and in the curriculum”), *modifying or cutting activities/content* (“I don’t think some of the group activities were useful in gaining knowledge, but they did help break the long duration of the training”), and providing more information on *how to apply the tools/concepts in general* (“More information on how to use the wheel would be good”) and with *diverse audiences* (“little cultural training,” “Add info about same sex relationships”). Last, when asked if they would recommend this training to their co-workers or others, 100% responded “yes.”



Sample comments regarding what was most useful.

- *Practical approach to strengthening families*
- *Everything was useful as it provided steps to building and or maintaining healthy relationships through a non-biased framework.*
- *“Down to earth” real examples were great.*
- *I can use all the info for my personal life and growth.*
- *The training manual that provides on-going helpful hints and actual tools that can be used directly with clients.*
- *The materials provided were excellent. The instructor was very engaging. As a facilitator, I was completely impressed by Dr. Futris training, delivery style and communicating the message of HRMET.*
- *An awesome experience. enlightening empowering, engaging. Great match with the work we do.*
- *I expected the training to be boring, but to my surprise it was great! The trainers did an excellent job and were highly energetic in their delivery. The training was very interactive, we were involved in the training.*
- *I was considering backing out of the training given my busy schedule, but I’m glad I didn’t. It was great. I am thoroughly pleased with the resources provided as well including the website! Great site!*
- *I thought that the quality of the information covered was top notch. The instructors were engaging and knowledgeable of the material covered, and handled a large group well. The meeting area was good, and the food was excellent. The HRMET binder is well put together, and I anticipate utilizing the tools frequently.*
- *The way the toolkit is structured you can adapt the materials in the work I currently do and to provide supplemental materials among the topics with different types of relationship audiences.*
- *The training was not only relevant to my job and the services we provide, I can also utilize the information in my own relationships which will help me better teach the class to our clients.*

Utility Reaction: Appropriateness for CWPs and Clients

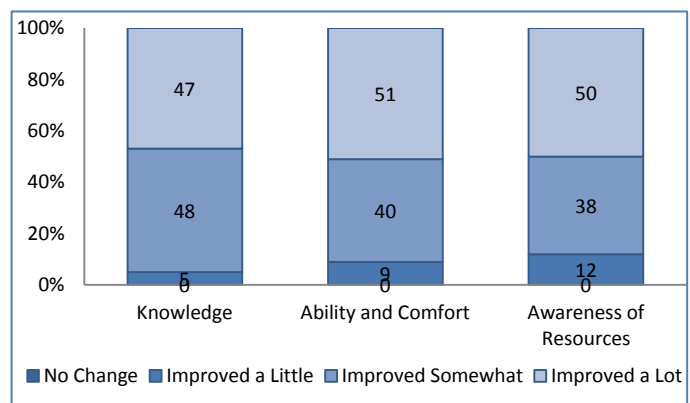
Next, given the focus of the training, questions were asked of professionals to determine how they viewed the potential helpfulness and relevance of healthy RME in the child welfare field (see Appendix B for items). Overall, positive feedback was shared by those who responded to the survey²: The vast majority (97%), on average, agreed or strongly agreed that RME was relevant to their clients (M=4.6) and professionals (M=4.5).

Sample comments regarding appropriateness for CWPs and Clients.

- *Absolutely this training and the program in general should enhance child welfare worker's ability to identify certain risk factors and then address them more effectively.*
- *I 100% agree that every parenting curriculum needs to have a co-parenting component and I am adding it to mine!*
- *Most of the families I have encountered in a child advocacy center setting are dysfunctional and in need of tools and examples of effective and expected parenting skills. Most ask where such skills can be found, as well. This program has helped me provide such information more efficiently.*
- *I am also looking at working parts of the training into our summer camp curriculum for teens. I feel teens need to know what healthy relationships look like and this training can help them understand and discover on their own if their partners or potential partners are good choices. The checklist tools will help them make informed choices about people, relationship expectations and considerations.*
- *With so many clients who were abused or neglected themselves as children, I think it will be hard to completely change what they internalized about parenting. But I do think this training would be a step in the right direction.*
- *We serve a very young generation of couples. I am trying to take it to another positive approach when it comes to dating a healthy relationship.*
- *I work with relative caregivers raising kin in parent absent homes who are mostly grandparents raising grandchildren. Most of them are single, but do have some long term marriages. I felt the training was most useful to my program in the ways of communicating and building strong grandparent/grandchild relationships. I can see many useful workshops for my participants based on the information learned in the training.*
- *I work with a parenting program that I feel the content will be useful in helping the parents begin to develop more meaningful relationships which will positively impact their children.*
- *I will be working with the Kinship Care program and feel the information will be instrumental in assisting our children into a smoother transition.*

Learning: Change in Knowledge, Ability/Comfort, and Resource Awareness

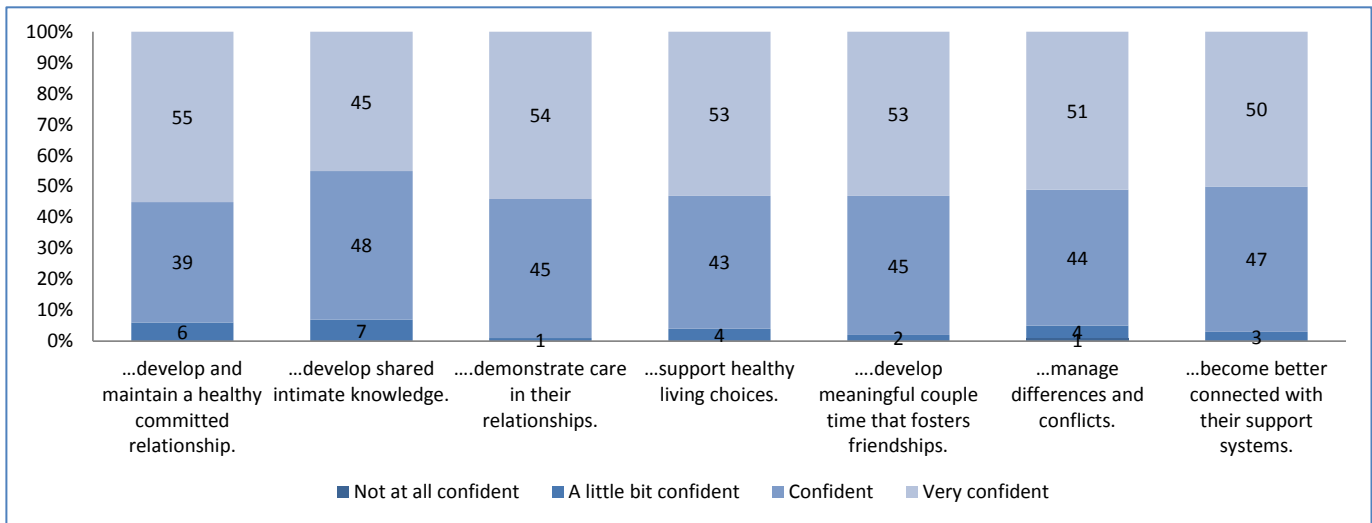
The professionals were asked how much they felt they improved in their knowledge, ability and comfort, and resource awareness related to incorporating healthy RME and information into their work. As summarized in Appendix B and illustrated in the figure, the majority of respondents reported they improved ‘somewhat’ or ‘a lot’ in knowledge (95%), ability/comfort (91%) and resource awareness (88%).



² These questions were only included on the online survey administered to participants from the 5/13, 6/13, and 7/15 trainings. Of the 61 participants who completed the survey, 58 responded to these items.

Learning: Confidence in Teaching RME

Based on the seven core concepts taught from the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Model (see Table in “Overview of HRMET” section), most of the participants (> 90%), on average, felt confident in helping individuals and couples develop the skills to form and maintain healthy relationships (see figure below).



Sample comments regarding confidence in teaching RME

- All of the 7 individual "Tips" for building healthy relationships tied nicely together and helped me to raise my knowledge base and confidence.
- I am confident I can take the information back and share to ensure strengthening the children and families the program I partner with serve
- Feel confident that I can convey this but there are many variables being successful.
- While I hope to be confident in my skills, I am just beginning as a counselor and will work hard to achieve this goal. The tools provided during this workshop will help me tremendously.
- I have not had the opportunity to put into practice any of the information yet. I have been reading over the manual (no chirping here) and feel I will be better equipped after I begin to utilize the information and receive feedback from the people I am working with.
- Being new to this type of work, I feel more confident about working with our direct care workers when they are discussing their cases and offering them tools that they can use to address some of the relationships their clients are facing.
- I will be more aware of issues that couples present and how to address them.

Learning Transfer: Application of Materials

When asked what they will do differently now as a result of the training, responses included plans to use their new skills both professionally and personally:

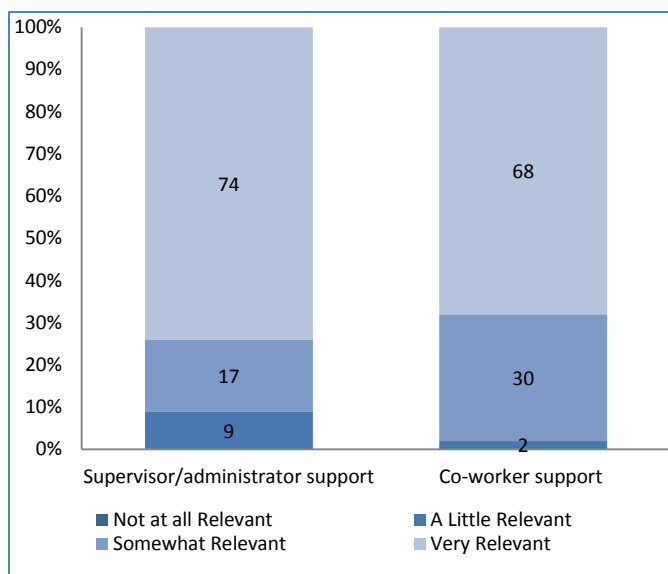
- Ensuring that the couples learn how to communicate to create the best environment for the children.
- Talk with my families more about their relations amongst themselves before talking with them about their relationship with their children
- Be more aware of my own communication and ways to improve it so I can pass that on to my clients. Be more willing to evaluate and discuss my clients' strengths and needs for communication.
- Have an open discussion with mothers as to how relationships with their child's/children's father is important to their development.

- *Career wise: I am now able to have the use of tools to aide me when providing support to my clients (families) I serve. On a personal level, I will approach conversations with my spouse differently, and I now have tools in hand to help diffuse arguments or to eliminate some altogether. My entire through process for dealing with my own relationship. I can then be a better leader / parent educator because I practice all the steps personally*
- *I am adding a co-parenting component to all of my parenting curriculums, and using the worksheets as needed for clients.*
- *I intend on expanding my approach when dealing with couples (assign homework through handout tools in manual, etc.) especially where there are children involved. My work with blended family issues will improve as well.*
- *I will incorporate the lessons in our teen programs. Our kids are not around healthy couples and don't know what a healthy relationship looks like. This will help us teach our kids how to be a better partner and what to look for in a partner before they repeat unhealthy behaviors. This training has also helped me see faults in my own relationship and how to fix them.*
- *Introduce the information to my clients to help them make better and informed choices of their ability to change, not to change someone else.*
- *While I intend to use the training in my job, I often thought of my relationship when discussing the exercises.*
- *When approaching a couple about relationships I will not stress the marital status of the relationship, but focus more on having the couple see/understand each other better and focus on positive communication and relationship building that will benefit the development of the child.*
- *I will be sharing with our Board members about the training and the tool kit, as we discuss possible ways to provide parenting support to members of our community. Hopefully they will understand that one of the best ways to strengthen families is by strengthening relationships within the family. On a personal level, I will use some of the communication techniques that are presented in the model.*

A six-month follow-up survey will be conducted to document how training participants have applied the tools and resources with their clients.

Organizational Support

Because the translation of training information into practice may more likely occur within the context of a supportive organizational system, we asked participants questions related to supervisor and coworker support. As illustrated in the figure, of the 58 participants who responded, most felt that their supervisor (91%) and co-workers (98%) would be somewhat or very supportive of them using the information and tools from the training with the individuals and families that they serve.



Sample comments regarding perceived support

- *My agency fully support and love the information and the outcomes that we hope to obtain.*
- *Not only do I think my co-workers will be supportive of my using this information, but I believe they will incorporate some of the tools themselves.*
- *I work with a great team who care tremendously about children and family welfare.*
- *The supervisor under whom I will work in August is very proactive in providing information about trainings and tools, and provides training on a regular basis, too, at her site. I am sure she will appreciate what I am able to share.*

Conclusion

Overall, based on responses from professionals who completed the 1-day training in 2014, similar outcomes were found when compared to past HRMET reports. Specifically, evaluation data indicates:

- The training increased knowledge and general feelings of efficacy about working with individuals and families on ways to support healthy couple relationships.
- Most of the participants indicated that the training was useful and relevant to their work, and particularly favored the tools and skills they had opportunities to practice in training and apply afterwards.
- The majority of participants felt their co-workers would be supportive of the materials, and they intended to apply their new resources both professionally and personally.
- Overall, respondents shared favorable reviews of the training and indicated they would recommend the training to others.

Sample of additional comments from participants.

- *Went to the training to receive CEUs for my LPC and CAC II but received much more that will help me when I work with families. Great training!*
- *The class was absolutely the best training I have attended in a long time. The material was relevant and the instructors made the class interesting.*
- *The training provided me with more specific tools to use when working with parents. This training is research based and provides tips for a healthy relationship that supports the family unit in a positive way.*
- *This information will enhance my own relationship as well as those that I work with in parent interactions.*
- *Instructor was relatable and understood the work that we perform.*
- *I believe that education is power and with this information I obtained at the training it will definitely be helpful with the population that we work with.*
- *I really liked the training and I hope the materials will be easily accepted by my clients and help them in either current or future relationships and relationship decisions*
- *GREAT curriculum!!! Please offer other curriculum that will strengthen families/marriages*
- *I love the way the information can be used across the board to enhance relationships that will assist with better child outcomes.*
- *The information in this training will enhance the tools and material that I currently utilize with my clients.*
- *This was the most useful training I have had in years. It is relevant and providing our children with stable families would make our interventions less threatening and hopefully more productive.*
- *The training and materials provided far exceeded my expectations. This training was superior to any other training workshop I have attended relative to counseling. Thank you so much.*
- *The material provided will be very useful not only as a reference but also as practical tools that I intend on utilizing. I would strongly recommend this training to others. Plus I plan on spreading the word about the opportunities provided to communities by the UGA Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences.*

Appendix A: Agencies Represented at a 2014 Training

- Annie E. Casey Foundation – Atlanta Civic Site
- Atlanta Healthy Start Consortium
- Benchmark Human Services, Inc.
- Bethany Christian Services
- Black Child Development Institute
- Brown Richards and Associates
- Center for Black Woman Wellness
- Child Care Resource & Referral
- Children’s First
- Cliff Valley School
- Community Activist
- Creative Community Services, Inc.
- Department of Family and Children Services
- Economic Opportunity Authority
- Enrichment Services Program, Inc.
- Families First
- Family Art Therapy Center
- First Team America
- Flowering Branch Children’s Shelter
- GA Association for Young Children
- Governor’s Office of Children & Family Services
- Greenbriar Children’s Center
- Griffin LPC, Inc.
- Habersham Family Connection
- HEARTS for Families
- Housing Authority of Savannah
- Jenkins County Family Enrichment Center
- Kinship Care Resource Center
- IDEAL Learning
- Lilyfield Mental Health
- Megellan Health
- National Safecare Research and Training Center
- New Covenant Church
- New Mercy’s Community Service
- New Horizons CSB
- Northside Psychological Services
- Prevent Child Abuse Georgia
- Rainbow House CRC
- Roosevelt Warm Springs/Voc Red Unit
- Savannah Chatham County Board of Education
- Sheltering Arms
- Solutions for Growth
- Street Smart Youth Project
- Strengthening Families Georgia
- Success At His Feet Christian Counseling Firm
- Supporting Families
- Taylor Made Consulting
- The Family Center
- Transformation Life Coaching
- United Way of Great Atlanta
- Youth Connections, INC.
- Zion Educational Program

Appendix B: Survey Items and Scores.

Affective Reaction: Training and Instructor Feedback	N	M	SD	Range
Overall how satisfied were you with this training?	86	4.76	.68	1.0-5.0
Training Rating				
Overall computed score (2-items; alpha = .84)	87	4.80	.37	4.0-5.0
The course/training met my expectations.	87	4.77	.42	4.0-5.0
The course/training was worth my time.	87	4.84	.36	3.0-5.0
Training Relevance and Usefulness				
Overall computed score (3-items; alpha = .80)	87	4.69	.41	3.3-5.0
The content was relevant to the work I do or plan to do.	87	4.69	.49	3.0-5.0
The course/training provided knowledge and skills for assessing and working with individuals and couples within the child welfare system.	87	4.69	.50	3.0-5.0
The content of the course/training was compatible with the needs of the individuals/families I work with.	87	4.67	.27	4.0-5.0
Instructor Rating				
Overall computed score (4-items; alpha = .72)	87	4.68	.41	3.8-5.0
The instructor(s) seemed knowledgeable about healthy relationship and marriage education.	87	4.91	.27	4.0-5.0
The instructor(s) seemed knowledgeable about the child welfare profession.	87	4.71	.56	3.0-5.0
The instructor(s) was engaging of participants/students	87	4.86	.35	4.0-5.0
The instructor(s) answered questions clearly	87	4.86	.35	4.0-5.0
Utility Reaction: Appropriateness for CWPs and Clients	N	M	SD	Range
Clients				
Overall computed score (2-items; alpha = .72)	58	4.57	.46	3.5-5.0
Child welfare clients' participation in marital/couple relationship enhancement programs can help reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect.	58	4.77	.43	4.0-5.0
The clients I work with can benefit from participating in programs that focus on enhancing marriage/couple relationships.	58	4.92	.27	4.0-5.0
Professionals				
Overall computed score (3-items; alpha = .74)	58	4.45	.49	3.3-5.0
The knowledge and skills I learn about working with couples will help me perform my job more effectively.	58	4.69	.47	4.0-5.0
Child welfare workers need knowledge and skills about enhancing marriage/relationships in order to do their job more effectively.	58	4.69	.55	3.0-5.0
Understanding characteristics of healthy marital/couple relationships will strengthen my assessment and case planning skills to reduce abuse/neglect.	58	4.72	.46	4.0-5.0

Learning: Change in Knowledge, Ability/Comfort, and Resource Awareness	N	M	SD	Range
Change in Knowledge				
Overall computed score (3-items; alpha = .80)	58	3.36	.60	1.67-4.00
My understanding of specific skills that support healthy couple relationship development.	58	3.50	.71	1.00-4.00
My awareness of strategies to strengthen the couple relationships of clientele who are diverse in culture, race, gender, social class, sexual orientation and age.	58	3.02	1.00	1.00-4.00
My knowledge of ways to help individuals/families that I work with manage challenges in their relationships.	58	3.58	.53	2.00-4.00
Change in Ability/Comfort				
Overall computed score (4-items; alpha = .67)	58	3.41	.59	2.00-4.00
My ability to assess for marital/couple relationship problems with the individuals/families I work with.	58	3.31	.73	1.00-4.00
My comfort discussing with the individuals/families I work with how their marital/couple issues and problems impact their child's safety, permanency and well-being.	58	3.48	.66	1.00-4.00
My ability to formulate culturally appropriate interventions for specific individuals/couples to strengthen their couple relationships.	58	3.17	.82	1.00-4.00
My comfort with providing information to individuals/families that I work with on ways they can improve their marital/couple relationships.	58	3.46	.71	1.00-4.00
Change in Resource Awareness				
Overall computed score (2-items; alpha = .70)	58	3.35	.57	1.75-4.00
My awareness of resources available that I can use with individuals/families in supporting couple relationships.	58	3.41	.70	1.00-4.00
My awareness of local educational and counseling services that strengthen couple relationships that I can refer individuals/families to.	58	3.02	.89	1.00-4.00
Learning: Confidence in Teaching RME				
Confidence in helping individuals/couples develop skills				
Overall computed score (7-items; alpha = .95)	86	3.47	.51	2.00-4.00
Develop and maintain a healthy committed relationship. (CHOOSE)	85	3.49	.61	2.00-4.00
Develop shared intimate knowledge. (KNOW)	86	3.38	.61	2.00-4.00
Demonstrate care in their relationships. (CARE)	86	3.52	.52	2.00-4.00
Support healthy living choices. (CARE FOR SELF)	86	3.50	.57	2.00-4.00
Develop meaningful couple time that fosters friendships. (SHARE)	86	3.50	.55	2.00-4.00
Manage differences and conflicts. (MANAGE)	86	3.46	.63	1.00-4.00
Become better connected with their support systems. (CONNECT)	86	3.47	.58	2.00-4.00
Organizational Support				
Overall, how supportive do you believe your supervisor/administrator will be of you using the knowledge and tools gained from this training with the individuals and families that you serve?	58	3.66	.63	2.00-4.00
Overall, how supportive do you believe your co-workers will be of you using the knowledge and tools gained from this training with the individuals and families that you serve?	57	3.67	.51	2.00-4.00



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Georgia Family Connection Partnership (<http://www.gafcp.org>)
Strengthening Families Georgia (<http://gayconline.org/resources/sfg>)
Together Georgia (<http://www.gahsc.org>)

For more information and resources to support healthy couple relationships,
visit www.gamarriages.org



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