

Guide to Developing Your Marriage Ministry

*Marriage Ministry Models
Created by California Healthy Marriages Coalition*





Marriage Ministry Model: Communication Skills “Hub” Program Guide to Developing Your Marriage Ministry

Overview

Healthy marriages are the basis of healthy families, which are the basis of healthy congregations. More and more, pastors are realizing the value of skills-based Marriage Education programs to complement the spiritual messages they give to their members. They are discovering that couple communication skills training can make a powerful and positive difference in the lives of the people they serve.

To help in this regard, California Healthy Marriages Coalition (CHMC) proposes that churches and faith-based organizations institute a **3-Part Marriage Ministry** (Marriage Preparation, Marriage Enrichment, Help for Troubled Marriages) to help their members prepare for and create dynamic, healthy, loving and lasting marriages. **Below is a Sample Model** built around a well-respected Communication Skills Training (CST) program as the core curriculum.

Marriage Preparation

This ministry is designed for couples who are formally engaged or seriously considering marriage, and includes:

- **Pre-Marital Inventory (PMI)** – each member of the couple answers a questionnaire which then reveals their personal profile on a range of marriage-related topics. Each person’s answers are compared to discover their areas of agreement and where they differ. The inventory then serves as an excellent basis upon which to have skilled discussion on these important topics.
- **8-12 hour CST Program** – the couple learns and practices the core communication skills of the particular Communication Skills Training (CST) curriculum which is offered.
- **Mentor Couple** – the couple has 3 or 4 two-hour sessions prior to the wedding with a mentor couple trained in PMI and the CST, then follow-up sessions with the mentor couple at various times throughout the first year.
- **Marriage Enrichment** – the couple commits to at least 12 hours per year of additional Marriage Education.

Marriage Enrichment

This ministry provides couple communication skills education to boost and strengthen the relationships of the couples who are already married, and includes:

- **Full 12-16 hour CST Program** – learning (or reviewing in-depth) the core communication skills of the particular Communication Skills Training (CST) curriculum which is offered.
- **Add a New Marriage Education Program** – each year to broaden, deepen, and further enrich the marriage, making ongoing Marriage Education a regular part of their married life.

Help for Troubled Marriages

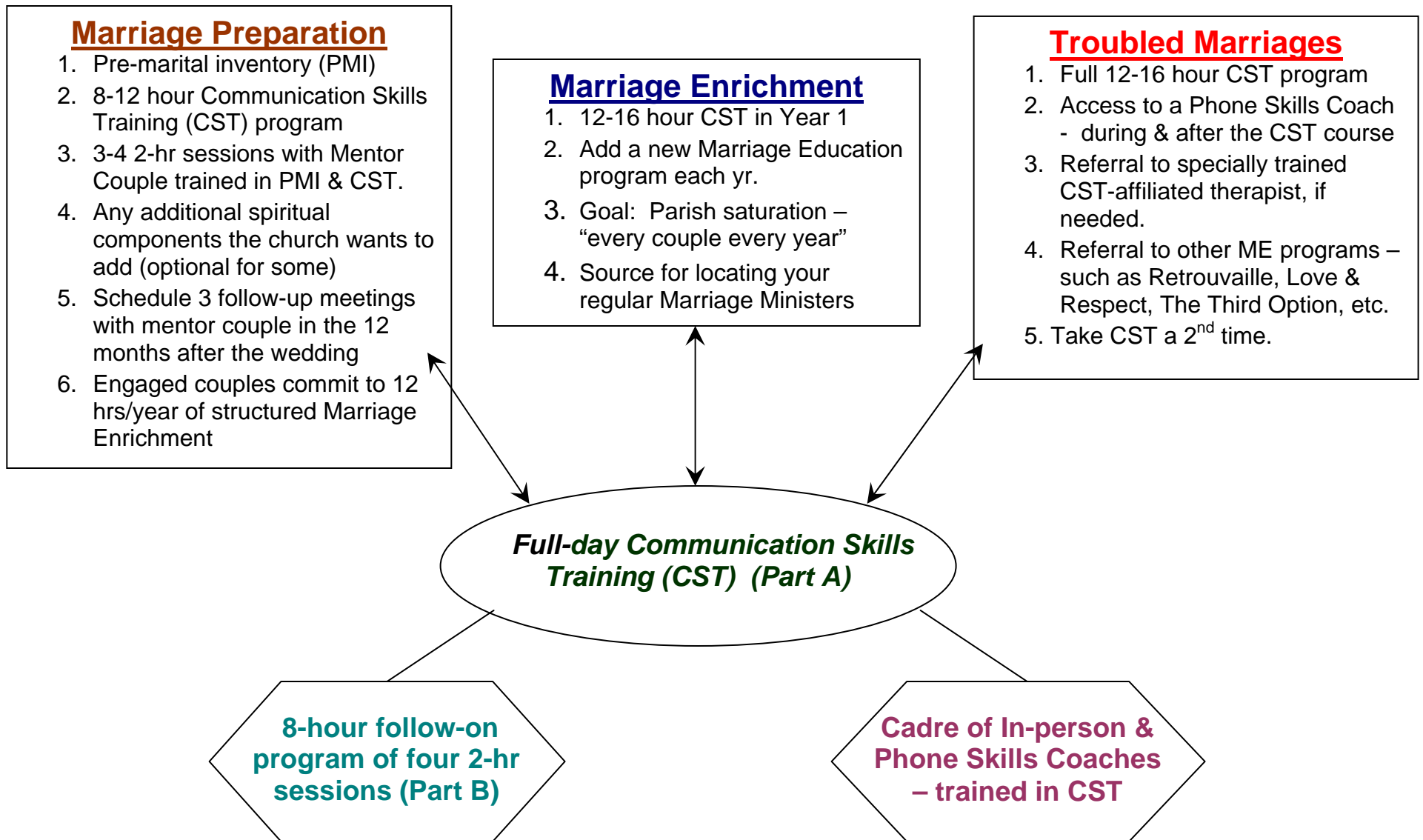
This ministry is designed to help couples with difficult or troubled marriages to break through their impasses, barriers and the hurts that have wounded them and their relationship, and with the help of a mentor couple, go onto the journey of rebuilding and strengthening their marriage:

- **Full 12-16 hour CST Program** – learning (or reviewing in-depth) the core communication skills of the particular Communication Skills Training (CST) curriculum which is offered.
- **Access to a CST Skills Practice Phone Coach** – during and after the CST course. This skills coaching will help the couple “stay in skill” as they discuss issues of concern in their everyday lives and help them develop the capacity to have skilled and successful conversations on their own.
- **Referral to a CST-Affiliated Licensed Therapist** – if needed.
- **Referral to other Marriage Education Programs** – that are most effective in dealing with particular couple issues and problems.
- **Full CST Program again** – it may be very helpful for these couples to review the CST class at least one more time during the year.

The Benefits

CHMC believes that a 3-Part Marriage Ministry will help provide a “full service” approach to couples in the church: helping engaged couples learn the skills to start their marriages off right, helping already married couples take their relationship to a whole new level, and helping troubled marriages find hope and a new beginning in their relationship. With such dynamic Marriage Ministries, couples will not only survive but thrive! **(See Chart on the Back of This Page of a Sample Communication Skills Training-Based Model for Marriage Ministry).**

A Sample Communication Skills Training-Based Model for Marriage Ministry





Starting With a Launch Program Guide to Developing Your Marriage Ministry

Overview

The California Healthy Marriages Coalition (CHMC) believes that robust Marriage Ministries provide at least three core program types: **Marriage Preparation, Marriage Enrichment, and Help for Troubled Marriages**. We believe that married couples should participate in **at least one structured Marriage Enrichment program a year**. Resources for Pre-Marriage couples and Troubled Marriages should be available at any time couples need them. Churches may also provide additional programs to teach Relationship Skills to youth, singles, expectant couples, and step-families.

Choosing a Launch Program

An ideal way to launch your Marriage Ministry is by using a fun, easy-to-implement Marriage Enrichment program with wide appeal to many couples. This will provide an opportunity to get your church excited about enriching marriages and recruit volunteers to lead and assist in future programs across the three program types. (You will find a sample timeline for how to do this on the reverse side of this guide.)

Some **good curricula to start with** are: 10 Great Dates, Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage, The Marriage Course and Love and Respect. These are DVD-based programs that are very popular and easy to lead.

Providing Other Programs and Curricula

As you plan your Marriage Ministry, think about what programs and curricula you will provide for the three core program types that are essential to a Marriage Ministry. You will find Marriage Education curricula for each program type that are recommended by CHMC on the attached list. There are also many other faith-based and non-faith-based programs available. You can find descriptions for many of these other programs on www.smartmarriages.com under "Directory".

Marriage Preparation: _____

Marriage Enrichment: _____

Help for Troubled Marriages: _____

Your programs for couples Preparing for Marriage and couples in Troubled Marriages may remain constant; however, you will want to provide a variety of Marriage Enrichment programs each year for married couples in your church.

Some Marriage Education programs require instructors to go through a training process in order to be certified to teach the class. Many of these trainings are available through CHMC. You can find information about upcoming facilitator trainings throughout California at www.CaMarriage.com. Additionally, the annual Smart Marriages Conference also provides many facilitator training opportunities. Find information about the conference at www.smartmarriages.com.

Suggested Timeline for Launch Program

This timeline illustrates a potential plan for recruiting course facilitators and Marriage Ministry volunteers for your first Marriage Education program:

- Before Program Starts: Recruit as many couples as possible in all stages of marriage-- from seriously dating/engaged, to newlywed, to parenting, to married for 50+ years—to participate in the program.
- First Session: Pastor or key church couple/leader enthusiastically welcomes participants and introduces the Marriage Education (ME) facilitator (if he or she is not the facilitator). He/she announces that this program is just the beginning of an exciting Marriage Ministry in which other opportunities like this will be offered down the road. (We strongly encourage the pastor and spouse to attend and participate in the initial ME program as an example to other couples.)
- Halfway Through the Program: Pastor or key church couple/leader visits the class again to see how couples are enjoying and benefiting from the Marriage Education program. He/she mentions again that other marriage enrichment opportunities like this will be coming up soon and encourages couples to be involved at any level they want to participate.
- Third to Last Session: Pastor or key church couple/leader announces more detailed information about other upcoming Marriage Ministries that the church plans to start and says that at the last two sessions a volunteer sign-up sheet will be passed around. Different volunteer roles may include: teaching a course, becoming a mentor couple, becoming a class skills coach and/or phone coach, providing logistical assistance, babysitting, providing snacks, etc. He/she encourages participants to think and pray about their potential role in helping the church's Marriage Ministry in the meantime.
- Second to Last and Last Sessions: Facilitator passes around volunteer sign-up sheets for those interested in helping at future programs, with space for volunteers to indicate their interests.
- After Launch Program Ends: Pastor/leader contacts volunteers and structures additional programs accordingly. Future ME leaders are trained in ME programs planned for the Marriage Ministry.

****Note:** Pastor/leader and Marriage Education facilitator may also take note of high functioning couples before and during the Marriage Education program and approach them separately to discuss the possibility of becoming leaders of Marriage Education programs.

Examples of Available M.E. Curricula

Pre-Marital Curricula for Engaged Couples						
Curriculum	Course Hours	Course Format	Age Range	Training Required	Distinguishing Characteristics	Couple Cost
Mastering the Mysteries of Love (MML) plus (FOCCUS or PREPARE/ENRICH)	16	Any combination equalling total course length	Adult-Any	3-day couple' class and 2-day facilitator training	See description under "Marriage Enrichment Programs"	Potentially free through CHMC; \$10 at regular price
FOCCUS Inventory	8	Couple inventory plus follow-up sessions.	Adult-Any	One-day facilitator training.	Available in five versions and ten languages. Online scoring available. Works as an add-on inventory to combine with communication skills programs, such as Mastering the Magic of Love.	\$20
PREPARE/ENRICH Inventory	8	Couple inventory plus follow-up sessions.	Adult-Any	One-day facilitator training.	Online scoring available. Includes inventory plus six sessions teaching couples skills.	\$30

Marriage Enrichment Curricula						
Curriculum	Course Hours	Course Format	Age Range	Training Required	Distinguishing Characteristics	Couple Cost
Active Relationships (Romance & Intimacy, Money Personalities, Marriage & Best Practices, Active Military Life Skills)	8 to 24	Any combination equalling total course length	Adult-Any	2-day training	Programs deal with issues that other curricula don't cover, including early childhood issues, anger management, money management.	CHMC does not provide facilitator training; participant materials \$62
Family Wellness--The Strongest Link, the Couple	Varies	6 sessions	Adult-Any	4-day facilitator training	Communication, problem-solving, personal/couple values and goals, money management, intimacy. Available in Spanish & English.	CHMC does not provide facilitator training; info at www.familywellness.com
Mastering the Mysteries of Love (MML)	16	Any combination equalling total course length	Adult-Any	3-day couples' class and 2-day facilitator training	MML uses ordinary words and step-by-step directions to teach 10 core communication skills. This foundational course gives couples experiences in deep intimacy—even in the heart of conflict—while teaching them tools to make solutions last. Couples learn how to put and keep honesty, compassion, empathy and trust in their relationship. Skills Coaches help couples use and master new skills during the course. Available in English, Spanish, and Korean. Also available as original Relationship Enhancement program (RE)	Potentially free through CHMC; \$10 at regular price
10 Great Dates	10	10 sessions- short DVD presentation and couple date	Adult-Any	Teach-out-of-the-Box (TOOB)	Easy-to-lead, skilled-based. Couples watch a short video on a marriage topic, then go out on a date to discuss that topic and how it relates to their own marriage. Various versions available: English, Spanish, Black Couples, Empty Nesters, Korean (book only)	Potentially free with CHMC; \$12.99 per couple at regular price
World Class Marriage	15	Any combination equalling total course length	Adult-Any	Attend couples' class and 2-day facilitator training.	Based on research by John Gottman and Carl Rogers. Teaches "16 Pillars" of a World Class Marriage, upon the foundation of empathy, acceptance, and genuineness. Teaches empathic listening, non-blameful confrontation, win-win conflict resolution, skills for avoiding blame, handling hot topics, love languages, commitment. Compatible with RE and MML. Available in English, Spanish, Dutch, French, Italian.	\$20 facilitator's materials through CHMC (\$75/regular); \$15 couples' packs through CHMC; (\$30 regular)

Help for Troubled Marriages						
Curriculum	Course Hours	Course Format	Age Range	Training Required	Distinguishing Characteristics	Couple Cost
The Third Option	28	14 2-hour weekly sessions	Adult-Any	None-Teach Out of the Box	14 2-hour sessions each focus on a different skill. Sessions run in a recurring cycle so that program is offered on a continual basis and couples may join at any time. One or both partners may attend as emphasis is on self-change. Utilizes "sharing couples" and skills instructors. Christian and secular versions available.	handout reproduction costs only
Mastering the Mysteries of Love with skills coaching, or combined with The Third Option	Varies	Any combination equalling total course length	Adult-Any	3-day couple' class plus 1-day skills coaching training	See description under "Marriage Enrichment Programs"	Potentially free with CHMC; \$10 at regular price

Examples of Available M.E. Curricula

Relationship Skills Courses for Youth						
Curriculum	Course Hours	Course Format	Age Range	Training Required	Distinguishing Characteristics	Participant Cost
Connections: "Dating and Emotions"	17	17 One-hour lessons	Grades 9-12	None-Teach Out of the Box	Best practices, research-based, & evaluated. Teaches teens about dating relationships, communication, recognizing destructive patterns, dealing with emotions, and interpersonal skills. Includes PREP concepts.	\$6.50
Connections: "Relationships and Marriage"	18	18 One-hour lessons	Grades 11-14	None-Teach Out of the Box	Best practices, research-based, & evaluated. Available in Spanish. Teaches self-awareness, communication, conflict management. Includes the hit "Marriage Game". Includes PREP concepts.	\$6.50
Love U2: "Relationship Smarts PLUS"	13	13 One-hour lessons	Grades 9-12	None-Teach Out of the Box	Best practices, research-based, & evaluated. Down-to-earth guidance for building healthy relationships.	handout reproduction costs only
PICK a Partner--No Jerk/Jerkette	8	5-hour course + 2 add-on modules--Anatomy of Love and Healthy Relationships	College-adult	Teach-out-of-the box (TOOB)	Recognizing subtle, hidden signs of future problems; judging your partner's true personality; analyzing your partner's conscience; pacing the relationship to prevent premature emotional attachments; focusing on your emotional health so you're not the jerk	\$350--Instructor Certification Packet; Participant workbooks \$8. or \$10. each

For Expectant Couples						
Curriculum	Course Hours	Course Format	Age Range	Training Required	Distinguishing Characteristics	Couple Cost
Bringing Baby Home	15	Any combination equalling total course length	Adult-Any	3-day training	Based on John Gottman's foundational research. For married couples near the birth of their first child. Parents may bring infants to class. Includes video series.	Leader's materials = \$250; \$30 per participant
Love's Cradle	22-40	Varies- full day sessions or shorter weekly sessions	Adult-Any	Mastering the Magic of Love training plus additional Love's Cradle module	Program for unwed parents around the time of the birth of 1st child. 5th Grade reading level material. Available in Spanish. Includes video presentations. Combines "Mastering the Magic of Love" with 6 additional 2-hour modules.	Potentially free through CHMC; \$10 regular price

For Step Families						
Curriculum	Course Hours	Course Format	Age Range	Training Required	Distinguishing Characteristics	Couple Cost
Smart Step	12	6 2-hour sessions. Sessions for parents and children held separately but at same time.	Adult-Any	Teach-out-of-the-box (TOOB)	For remarried couples and their children. Focuses on building couple and family strengths and includes presentations, hands-on exercises, group discussions, and multimedia demonstrations. Topics include understanding stepfamily development, defining roles and rules, stepparenting strategies, and navigating healthy co-parenting relationships.	handout reproduction costs only