



## About The Authors

**Francesca Adler-Baeder, Ph.D., CFLE** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University and State Extension Specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. She also serves as the Director of the Center for Children, Youth, and Families. Her work involves bridging research and practice through curriculum development, program implementation, and applied research projects that support families under stress and relationships in diverse family types. Dr. Adler-Baeder coordinates the Alabama Healthy Marriage Initiative and oversees federally-funded projects focused on implementing and documenting the impact of programs for youth and adults that support healthy relationships, marriages, responsible fatherhood, and family stability. She also serves as Co-Director of the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network and the Director of the National Stepfamily Resource Center.

**Angela Bradford, M.S.** is a Doctoral Student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University assisting in the evaluation of the Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative project. She completed her Masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Auburn University. She has served as the Student Associate/Representative on the Alabama Board of Marriage and Family Therapy as well as a specialized committee for the Alabama Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy. Mrs. Bradford has worked as the Family Advocate at the Child Advocacy Center and currently works as a family therapist with East Alabama Mental Health/Mental Retardation Center's Family and Children's Services.

**Mallory Erickson** is a Graduate Student in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University. She is studying to become a licensed marriage and family therapist. Mrs. Erickson works with the Alabama Healthy Marriage Initiative to implement and evaluate marriage education programs targeting youth, pre-marital couples, non-married parents, minority families, and stepfamilies. Her research interests include stepfamily functioning in relation to couple dynamics and gender-based roles and expectations.

**Ted G. Futris, Ph.D. CFLE** is a State Extension Family Life Specialist in Family and Consumer Sciences Extension and an Assistant Professor in Child and Family Development at the University of Georgia. Dr. Futris works with community, state, and national efforts to support healthy and stable marriages and is involved in delivering and evaluating the effectiveness of pre-marital education on the formation of healthy and stable relationships. His applied research focuses on understanding healthy couple and marital relationships and positive parenting practices across various contexts in order to inform the development of educational programs and resources that promote healthy and stable families. Dr. Futris serves as Co-Director of the National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network.

**Katie Henderson** is a Graduate Student in the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development at Utah State University. She has a degree in Political Science and has interned with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services where she worked directly with the Special Assistant for Marriage Education. Ms. Henderson currently works on several grant-funded projects that are assessing stability and satisfaction in remarriages as well as interventions to support adults and children in stepfamilies.

**Brian J. Higginbotham, Ph.D., LMFT** is an Assistant Professor and Family Life Extension Specialist in the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development at Utah State University. Dr. Higginbotham provides statewide leadership and support for programs that strengthen relationships and developmental assets in families, youth, and children. He is also a licensed marriage and family therapist and has served on the Board of Directors of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. Dr. Higginbotham has implemented and evaluated various grant-funded relationship education initiatives including programs for high school students, married couples, stepfamilies, and non-married pre-natal couples. Currently, Dr. Higginbotham is the Principal Investigator on a five-year, federally funded project that is teaching relationship skills to an ethnically diverse group of children and adults in stepfamilies.

**Jennifer L. Kerpelman, Ph.D.** is a State Adolescent and Family Life Extension Specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and a Professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Auburn University. Dr. Kerpelman has extensive experience conducting research and providing outreach resources, programs and workshops in the area of adolescent development. Her applied research has focused on the risk and resilience of low income, rural African American adolescents, and on youth-focused programs designed to enhance adolescents' self-development and interpersonal skills. Currently, Dr. Kerpelman is the Principle Investigator on a state and federally funded project designed to implement, and evaluate the impact of, a relationship/marriage education curriculum for adolescents. The findings from this 5-year evaluation study are anticipated to result in a national model for youth-focused relationship education.

**Charlotte Shoup Olsen, Ph.D.** is a State Family Life Extension Specialist in Family and Consumer Sciences and an Associate Professor in the School of Family Studies and Human Services at Kansas State University. Dr. Shoup Olsen specializes in programming that addresses couple relationships, family communication, stepfamily living, and family divorce. She has developed several extension programs, including *CoupleTalk: Enhancing Your Relationship* and *Stepping Stones for Stepfamilies*, that have been adopted in other states and has been invited to give training at numerous national and state professional conferences on these programs. Prior to Extension, she had considerable experience in international and cross cultural settings in family support programs, including Peace Corps and at-risk programs for youth from New York City and the state of Kansas. Dr. Olsen was a member of the original network of Extension Specialists in 1998 that developed programming resource materials distributed through the national Extension system on marriage and couples' education. She currently is working collaboratively with Dr. Skogrand in developing marriage education resources for Latino families.

**Karen Shirer, Ph.D.** is an Associate Dean for Extension and Capacity Area Leader for Family Development at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Karen Shirer has 32 years of experience as an educator, manager, researcher, and administrator for family and consumer sciences programs in both formal and non-formal settings. Prior to coming to Minnesota, Dr. Shirer served as Assistant Professor and Extension Human Development Specialist with Michigan State University where she provided statewide leadership for Extension programs in early childhood care and education, and relationship enhancement education for at-risk and low-income families, which also encompass her research interests. She is co-author of *Caring for My Family: Encouraging Family Formation and Father Involvement*, a program designed to help mothers and fathers of newborns learn about building healthy relationships with each other and their children, and equip unmarried parents with skills for making healthy decisions and to explore future options for their relationship. She has a strong interest and expertise in participatory processes for planning, implementing and developing community-based educational programs and services.

**Linda Skogrand, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist in the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development at Utah State University. Dr. Linda Skogrand's 25-year professional career has been a combination of social services in inner city communities and scholarship in colleges and universities. She has co-authored *Surviving and Transcending a Traumatic Childhood: The Dark Thread*, which describes how adults who experienced a traumatic childhood became healthy as adults. She has also co-authored a marriage and family textbook, *Marriages and Families: Intimacy, Diversity, and Strengths*, 6th edition. She has co-authored multiple articles about ways to better serve diverse populations through family education. Current research includes what makes strong marriages in Latino and the Navajo cultures and a national study about what makes great marriages.



The **National Extension Relationship and Marriage Education Network (NERMEN)** envisions a nationwide outreach through Extension specialists and educators in partnership with agencies and organizations at the national, state, and community levels that supports individuals and couples preparing for, developing, and enriching healthy relationships and healthy marriages. NERMEN's mission is to provide research-based resources and promote partnerships to advance the knowledge and practice of relationship and marriage education.



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