



Family Resiliency and Economic Well-Being Impact Statement

Issue

Due to the troubled economy, poor financial practices, and increases in health insurance rates and fuel costs, many Oklahoma families are struggling to make ends meet and stay in their homes. Many Oklahomans find themselves in peril of legal action and excessive fees because they employ more disruptive financial practices like payday loans and bogus check writing. Oklahoma families are also at a higher risk of breaking down. Oklahoma ranks among the top 5 in all states for number of divorces; 32% of all adults have divorced compared to 21% nationally and a higher percentage of married Oklahomans have thought about divorce (56%) than in the country as a whole (42%). Children whose parents divorce are often traumatized, especially when those parents inadvertently use their children to get back at their spouse or when their anger and hurt spills over into their relationship with their child.

What Has Been Done

Since 2007 extension educators in 14 counties have offered a financial literacy program for persons involved in dire financial circumstances like bankruptcy. In January of 2008 District 6 county extension educators began offering this program to court-ordered bogus check writers. The Region 6 District Attorney's office requested a partnership to deliver financial management classes to offenders in the District 6 counties: Grady, Caddo, Jefferson and Stephens. The program, Making Sense of Money Management has been offered 29 times since 2008. These counties have seen a 40% drop in bogus checks.

Extension educators offer programs targeting youth audiences including high schools. The High School Financial Planning Program offered through the National Endowment for Financial Education offers free materials to instructors and students addressing 11 of the 14 topic areas required by the Passport for Financial Literacy. Reality Check is a program developed by the Jumpstart coalition which according to their website is a quick, easy and free online resource designed to help young people see what it's really going to take to live independently as an adult consumer.

Since 2001, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service has worked with various agencies in the state in a collaborative effort to provide standardized homebuyer education to potential homebuyers. Research shows that homebuyer education and counseling lowers the incidences of foreclosure. Extension educators have been trained and certified to deliver homebuyer education programs. Participants are provided with the information they need to make good decisions about home purchase and homeownership. OCES conducted Co-Parenting Through Divorce classes that teach divorced or separated parents how to reduce the effects of divorce on their children. Parents learn how to not use their children to get back at their spouse and how to manage their emotions when they are with their child.

Impact

During 2012, 141 participants completed the Making Sense of Money Management class.

In 2012, Reality Check materials were used with 988 students in 13 schools.

In 2012, 3,500 individuals received homebuyer education. Surveys administered to participants indicated that potential homebuyers evaluated their home buying skills as significantly improved in the areas of understanding: advantages and disadvantages of homeownership, credit, real estate professionals, loans and lenders, and home inspections. **Thirty-three percent of participants in class reported purchasing a home.**

OCES conducted Co-Parenting Through Divorce classes with 1,500 participants in 2012. Because the Co-Parenting Through Divorce class is court mandated in several counties, parents generally arrive upset and angry about having to take the class, but leave appreciative of having been there. One parent's comments summed up the general sentiment, "I hated having to go to the class but was glad I did. I learned so much about how to help my child and get along with my ex. IF I had taken this class earlier I might not have gotten the divorce."

Scope of Impact: State

Contact: Kimberly A. Williams, M.S., Family & Consumer Sciences Program Evaluation Specialist
135 Human Environmental Sciences, Stillwater, OK 74078-6111 405-744-9921
kimberly.williams@okstate.edu

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