

## ***Smart Steps* Stepfamily Education** **Frequently Asked Questions for the 2011-2012 Program Year**

### **1. What are we supposed to do?**

*See the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).*

### **2. Who can participate in the classes?**

*Anyone who has a step relationship of any kind can participate. However, participation must be voluntary. Participants may be married, cohabiting, or dating. You will need to have a concurrent class(es) for children ages 6-18 and childcare for children ages 5 and younger. There is no income eligibility requirement.*

### **3. What if we do not complete the minimum 14 adults (7 couples)?**

*“Completion” means couples attended 5 of the 6 classes. You can do make up classes. If you are unable to honor this commitment, we will likely have to reduce or terminate your subcontract for the following year. Furthermore, you should not invoice USU for the full amount of the subcontract unless you have served the minimum number of participants.*

### **4. What is the best way to advertise and recruit participants?**

*“The best way” is whatever works. This will probably be different for each site. Successful recruitment will necessitate making the course attractive. Couples in stepfamilies tend to be interested in services that offer help for their whole family. Consider advertising this as a “class for children in stepfamilies and their parents.” We have produced advertising templates for you. Start advertising early – at least one or two months prior to your start date.*

*Particularly if you are struggling to recruit participants, you should consider all possible recruiting strategies - including those that are expensive (i.e., newspaper ads, mass mailings, etc.). In the past, we’ve had agencies not do any advertising and then struggle to fill their classes. It is hard to justify paying the full amount of the subcontract when there is little-to-no advertising and the minimum numbers of participants are not served.*

### **5. When are we supposed to start and finish our classes?**

*Try to have your first course completed by March 31<sup>st</sup>. All remaining courses need be completed by August 31<sup>st</sup>.*

### **6. Should we set a date or wait until we have enough people to start?**

*Set a date for your classes as soon as possible. Print the dates in your newsletters, advertise, and get the word out through your community partners. This will require time, so start early! Avoid postponing the class after the date is set. Talk to your USU project manager before postponing a class.*

### **7. Should we do a pre-registration?**

*Yes. It is not uncommon for only 1/3 of people, who say they will attend, to actually show up. We would like every agency to establish an “enrollment period” or hold some type of registration session. By doing this you can get all the paperwork out of the way, give an overview of the program, resolve concerns, and get a more accurate count of committed participants. We recommend the enrollment period end 1 or 2 weeks before the class starts so you know how much more recruiting you still need to do.*

### **8. Can I use the USU logo to advertise for this class?**

*Not without prior approval of the USU Marketing Department. Contact your Project Manager for help receiving approval. Permission has already been given to use the Smart Steps and National Stepfamily Resource Center logo. The logos are available at [www.stepfamily.usu.edu](http://www.stepfamily.usu.edu)*

**9. Do we have to include the federal disclaimer on media?**

*Yes, everyone is required to use the disclaimer on all advertising materials (flyers, newspaper ads, etc.). The disclaimer is available at [www.stepfamily.usu.edu](http://www.stepfamily.usu.edu). **The content, design, and layout of all media presented to the general public must be approved by the government.** You are welcome to use the approved media templates provided online. You will just need to add your agency information, as well as specific class times and dates. Please send us a copy for review/approval before distributing or using your own advertising/media material.*

**10. Do the classes have to be offered for free?**

*Yes. The government considers fees as barriers.*

**11. Do we have to provide childcare?**

*Yes. Childcare will need to be available for children age five and younger. This is a great incentive for attendance that should be promoted. Older children will attend the youth classes.*

**12. Can gay/lesbian individuals attend our classes?**

*Yes. Anyone is welcome to attend. However, because of the Defense of Marriage Act, we cannot use federal resources to modify the program for same-sex couples.*

**13. Can someone re-enroll (take the class twice)?**

*Yes; however, agencies should give priority to first-time attendees.*

**14. Does everyone have to receive a “Letter of Information” and complete the surveys?**

*Participants can choose not to fill out the surveys but all adult participants must receive a “Letter of Information” to ensure they are attending voluntarily. All youth must receive an “Informed Assent for Youth”. Please do everything you can to encourage adult participants to complete the surveys. The surveys provide the data we need to evaluate the program and prepare federal reports.*

**15. What if a couple joins after the first class?**

*That is fine; although in order to “count”, a couple must attend 5 of the 6 classes. The first time someone attends a class, they will need to receive a “Letter of Information” and be given the “Pre Program Survey”. Children will also need to receive a copy of the “Informed Assent for Youth”.*

**16. Why do we need to track attendance?**

*USU needs copies of the attendance forms to facilitate data entry and to prepare federal reports. We also hope you will use the attendance record to contact participants who miss a class. Expressing personal interest about your participants’ lives is probably the best retention strategy available. Phone calls and follow-up will greatly enhance retention.*

**17. How much time should we schedule for each class?**

*Each module contains 2 hours of instruction. Factor in additional time for the meal and for data collection.*

**18. How do we get additional forms?**

*We will provide participant folders for 20 people (10 couples) for each class. You can request additional folders from your project manager. You can also download and print extra English and Spanish versions of all the evaluation forms at [www.stepfamily.usu.edu](http://www.stepfamily.usu.edu).*

**19. Are we responsible for following Federal guidelines when spending the grant money?**

*Yes! Your agency is on a subcontract with USU and since the project is funded with Federal money you are responsible for knowing and following Federal guidelines when spending it.*

**20. What and when can we invoice USU? What is proportional billing?**

*Your agency has entered into a cost-reimbursable subcontract with USU and has agreed to meet the timeline and conditions outlined therein. You may only invoice USU for expenditures that were spent related to the implementation of this project. Items that will be used for multiple projects should be billed proportionally. For example, if you buy a projector that will be used half of the time for Smart Steps and half of the time for another project, USU should only be billed for 50% of the cost. Failure to submit invoices according to the timeline and terms of the subcontract as well as failure to serve the agreed upon number of participants may negate USU's obligation to reimburse all of your allowable costs. Please be mindful that one agency's mishandling of funds puts this whole project at risk.*

**21. What incentives can we use to recruit and retain participants?**

*According to the government, allowable expenses – including incentives – must be (a) reasonable, (b) allocable to the project and, (c) necessary and germane to the project. Of course you are free to use non-federal funds from other sources to pay for federally non-allowable incentives. When in doubt, check with the USU project manager.*

*Allowable incentives:*

- Childcare during the classes
- Gas vouchers/cards to enable participants to drive to the classes (*You must maintain a list of recipients. Each recipient must sign a statement indicating it will not be used for alcohol, tobacco, entertainment, or firearms.*)
- Books about improving relationships
- Food/meals at the classes

*Unallowable incentives with Federal dollars (there are many others but these are the most commonly asked about):*

- Cash
- Drawings and lotteries
- Entertainment
- Any gift card or voucher that could be redeemed for alcohol, tobacco products, entertainment, or firearms

**22. Can we do case-management, therapy, or post-program services (e.g., Booster Sessions)?**

*No. These funds are for 6-week Smart Steps classes.*

**23. Should facilitators have a background check?**

*Yes. Paid and volunteer facilitators will be interacting with adults and youth. It is important we take all reasonable safeguards to protect participants.*

**24. What if we do not, or cannot, fulfill our agreement?**

*We want this project to be enjoyable and successful for everyone. Our funding, and therefore your funding, is dependant upon all of us “doing” what we said we would do. The timeline must be followed and all requirements of the grant must be fulfilled in order for funding to be continued the following year.*

*We have already invested a lot of time and energy towards a partnership with your agency and would like our partnership to continue for many years. Keep us informed on your successes and difficulties and make sure to set aside some of your money in case you need to increase/improve your recruitment and retention efforts and/or need to offer an additional class. Work hard, make a difference in the lives of your participants, and – to borrow a line from the Smart Steps curriculum – “embrace the journey!”*