Why Indiana Needs Strong Marriages

Indiana's Public Policies Should Recognize the Importance of a Married Mother and a Father

The married two-parent family is fundamental to the health of Indiana. However, because the institution of the family has been steadily dismantled and held in disdain by many political, academic and media leaders, some have overlooked the importance of marriage and the traditional family. The decline of the family has not gone unnoticed. Social scientists have documented the correlation between living arrangements and cultural decay.

When legislators consider changing various policies they must recognize the importance of a married mother and father. This BRIEFING PAPER offers an overview of children raised

Stable Marriages Protect Children From Abuse

- A comprehensive study of child abuse found that children living with their biological married parents are 20 to 33 times safer than in other family configurations. 1
- Child abuse is 20 times higher than in traditional families if the parents are cohabiting. 2
- Child abuse is 33 times higher if a single mother is cohabiting with a boyfriend. 3
- The rate of child abuse is 14 times higher than a traditional two-parent family if the child lives alone with his biological mother. 4

Stable Marriages Protect Indiana From Crime

- Delinquency rates are 10 to 15 percent higher in broken homes than intact ones. 5
- Eighty percent of the boys sent to the Indiana Boy's School came from divorced or single-parent homes. 6
- Professor Jill Rosenbaum, Professor of Criminology at California State University found that only 7 percent of the women committed to the California Youth Authority came from intact homes. 7
- A state-by-state-analysis found that a 10 percent increase in the percentage of children living in single parent homes (including divorces) resulted in a 17 percent increase in juvenile crime rates. 8

Stable Marriages Produce More Healthy Children

- Eighty percent of adolescents in psychiatric hospitals come from broken homes. 9
- Single-parent children and children of divorce experience greater risk of injury, asthma, headaches, and speech defects than children from intact families. 10

"Perhaps the most consistent finding concerning the state of marriage is its association with enhanced positive well-being."

Professor of Psychology Wendy Wood, Texas A&M - upon review of 93 studies of marriage and various mental and physical indicators.

Stable Marriages Promote Economic Stability for Children

- Some 92 percent of children on welfare today are from divorced or single-parent homes.[11]
- Children from female headed homes are five times more likely to be poor than children in two-parent families and nine times as likely to be in deep poverty than children from intact married homes . 12
- The vast majority of children raised in a married two-parent family will never be poor during childhood. By contrast, the vast majority of children who spend some time in a single-parent home will experience poverty. 13

Stable Marriages Promote Better Education

- Adults born outside of marriage found that the longer the time spent in a single parent family, the less education was attained at all income levels. 14
- Having a father in the home significantly reduces the likelihood of a student being referred for psychological counseling in school. 15
- Thirty-three percent of children from intact married homes ranked as high academic achievers, compared with 17 percent of single-parent homes. 16
- Children from single parent or divorced homes are more likely to be expelled, drop out of school or have disciplinary action taken against them. 17

Stable Marriages Benefit Women

- The most frequently cited relationship between the batterer and the female victim is boyfriend. The least cited is husband. 18
- Wives are far less likely than single women to be the victim of a crime. A 1994 Justice Department report fond that single and divorced women were four to five times more likely to be victimized in a year than a married woman. The report included domestic violence. 19
- Married women have the lowest rates of mental illness, depression or suicide compared to people in any other marital category. 20

SOURCES

1) Robert Whelan, Broken Homes & Battered Children. 2) Ibid. 3)Ibid. 4) Ibid. 5)13) Dr. Nicholas Zill. 6)George Witwer, Indiana Policy Review. 7) J. Rosenbaum, "Family Dysfunction & Female Delinquency." 8) Patrick Fagan, "Real Root Causes of Violent Crime." 9) NIHR Report, 1997 10) David Eggebeen. 11) Dept. HHS, "AFDC Flash Report. 12) American Sociological Review. 13) David Elwood, Poor Support. 14) Shelia Krien, Univ of Illinois. 15) Psychology in the Schools, 1991. 16) National Assoc. of Ele. School Principals. 17) Ibid. 18) Stanton p.63. 19) National Crime Victimization Survey & L. Waite Case for Marriage p.152. 20) Robins Regier -Stanton p.86.