

A Randomized Controlled Trial Study of an African American Adaptation of the Marital First Response Curriculum

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Individuals in marriages and long-term, committed relationships often turn to friends and family members for support and input about relationship problems. Given African Americans' lower use of mental health services, these confiding relationships may be particularly important to this community. The goal of this study was to evaluate a community-engaged educational program developed to support and guide people who are natural confidants to people in marriages or long-term committed relationships, Marital First Responders (MFR). MFR was specifically adapted for African Americans who self-identify as confidants for others who are dealing with relationship stress. The focus was on increasing confidants' knowledge, skills, and confidence—and potentially increasing their frequency of confiding interactions. Using a randomized controlled trial design, confidants were assigned to receive a one-day workshop or be placed on a wait-list control group. At three month follow up, findings showed the intervention produced more knowledge, skills, and confiding interactions, but not greater confidence. The lack of a confidence effect may be that it takes longer than three months for confidence to increase; or that there might be a ceiling effect: people who already identify as confidants might already have a high degree of confidence prior to the training. There could also be measurement issues with the confidence variable, which had just three items, that made it not sensitive to change based on the intervention. ***Clinical Implications:*** This study offers evidence to support the feasibility of an educational, skill-building and community-based intervention to support relationships among African Americans.