**Utah Healthy Marriage Initiative Crossroads of Divorce Project**

• 2007 legislation: mandated divorce orientation education for divorcing parents with dependent children.

• Purposes: (a) help people considering divorce make a more educated decision; (b) give resources and options for repairing the relationship; (c) explain alternatives to litigation such as collaborative lawyering and mediation; (d) information on post-divorce resources.

• Legislated curricular requirements for divorce orientation education:

1. options available as alternatives to divorce;
2. resources available to improve or strengthen the marriage;
3. discussion of the positive and negative consequences of divorce;
4. discussion of the process of divorce;
5. resources available from courts/administrative agencies for resolving custody/support issues without filing for divorce;
6. options available for proceeding with a divorce, including: mediation, collaborative law, and litigation.

• Implementation: 1-hr. class added onto 2-hr. mandated divorcing parents class (i.e., good parenting post-divorce).

• Issues: Timing—Is it too late? Collecting information and feedback from participants, instructors, judges, lawyers, mediators, and others about timing (and other issues); may recommend requiring before filing for divorce; make available on Internet.

• Issues: Curriculum and Dosage—no standardized curriculum and only one hour. Utah Healthy Marriage Initiative helped to produce and offer a research-based guidebook to supplement the class: *“Should I Keep Trying to Work It Out? A Guidebook for Individuals and Couples at the Crossroads of Divorce (and Before).”*

• Overview of “Crossroads” Guidebook:

— Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

— Chapter 2: Can unhappy marriages become happy again? How?

— Chapter 3:How common is divorce and what are the reasons?

— Chapter 4: Does divorce help adults become happier?

— Chapter 5: What are the possible consequences of divorce for children?

— Chapter 6: What are the possible consequences of divorce for adults?

— Chapter 7:What are the possible financial consequences of divorce?

* Chapter 8: What are the legal options for divorce? What should I expect during the divorce process?

• Features of “Crossroads” Guidebook:

* Research-based (but written at 10th-grade level): 320 endnotes.
* Chapters and subheadings in answer-to-questions format.
* Balanced and sensitive: pros and cons (by legislation language); non-judgmental.
* Thinking/writing exercises at end of each chapter.
* Personal stories and interview quotations from former “crossroaders”
* Suggested resources.

• “Crossroads” feedback efforts: 100-150 brief phone interviews with divorce orientation education class participants; 30 in-depth interviews;

• Future:

 -- Revision of “Crossroads” based on feedback; free/inexpensive access; wide usage.

 -- Build a support infrastructure for couples who decide to reconcile.

 -- National version of “Crossroads” (remove Utah specific statistics, info).