

The Community Marriage Policy (CMP) Fact Sheet

What is a Community Marriage Policy (CMP)?

A document signed by an ecumenical group of clergy committing to five goals:

1. Require rigorous marriage preparation.
2. Renew existing marriages.
3. Restore troubled marriages.
4. Reconcile the separated.
5. Revive stepfamilies.⁶⁹

Who developed the CMP?

Michael and Harriet McManus

- Mike McManus began writing the nationally syndicated “Ethics and Religion” column in 1981.
- He often highlighted the methods churches used to prepare and strengthen marriages.⁷⁰

McManus Observed Three Strategies That Decrease Divorce

- Premarital education of basic relationship skills.
- Use of a premarital inventory to determine couple strengths and growth areas.
- Use of couples with strong marriages to mentor engaged or troubled couples.^{71,72}

The First CMP- signed in 1986: Modesto, California

- Ninety-five pastors signed the Modesto Community Marriage Policy.
- Eleven years later (1997) Modesto’s divorce rate had dropped 35%.⁷³

Growth of CMP

- As of October 2003, 178 communities in 40 states have signed a CMP.⁷⁴

Beyond the Churches

- In 1996, James Sheridan heard McManus speak.
- Sheridan concluded that as a District Court Judge he could also have an impact on couples’ preparation for marriage.⁷⁵

CMP with Civil Officials

- In 1997 Lenawee County, Michigan became the 55th community to adopt a CMP.

- However, they were the first to involve civil officials who pledged to demand serious marriage preparation.⁷⁵

Goals of the CMP

- Prepare couples for marriage.
- Train mature couples to act as mentors.
- Develop and implement programs for troubled marriages.
- Promote sexual abstinence outside marriage.
- Support those recovering from divorce.⁷⁶

Marriage Savers

- McManus initiated the Marriage Savers ministry and promotes materials that address the goals of a CMP.
- Marriage Savers seeks to:
 - Prepare for marriage.
 - Strengthen existing marriages.
 - Restore troubled marriages.⁷⁷

Why does the CMP work?

- Approximately 86% of marriages are performed in a church or synagogue, the faith community has an opportunity to affect the preparation of couples for marriage.⁷⁸

Springfield, MO

- June 2005: Springfield area clergy representing twenty-seven churches have signed the Springfield area Community Marriage Policy.⁷⁹