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IMPACT OF COUPLES RELATIONSHIP AND PARENTING ON ADOLESCENT OUTCOMES TO BE EXPLORED

ATHENS, Ga. -- Can a good marriage strengthen the impact parents have on their children? That's the fundamental question of a \$2.5 million, five-year study beginning this fall by University of Georgia researchers.

"We are comparing two groups to find an approach that is best for parents having an impact in supporting their kids," according to Steven Beach, director of the UGA Institute for Behavioral Research and a distinguished research professor of psychology. "We're confident that the information and listening skills developed in marriage research over the past 30 years are useful to couples when they use them. What we're testing is whether we can enhance those listening skills and help couples incorporate those skills into their parenting practices."

The study will involve 460 African-American couples over the age of 21 who are either married or have definite plans to marry in the future, and an adolescent child ages 10 to 16 that resides in the home with the couple. The study will use PREP, the Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, which has been proven in numerous studies as an effective tool for helping couples improve their relationships along with SAAF, the Strong African American Families Program. Couples will be divided into two groups. One group will work through the combination of PREP and SAAF programs on their own; a second will meet with a trained leader who will lead them through the combined PREP and SAAF program.

"Research shows that most couples want their marriages to be successful," he said. "So the key is finding ways to better empower them to attain that goal. At the same time, parenting can be one of the most difficult areas confronting couples and it can challenge the best of relationships."

"During the past 20 years, psychologists have developed tools that have helped to highlight the limitations of parenting skills alone. This research may show that by adding a marital program to parenting programs, we can improve the positive effects of both," he said.

In addition to Beach, co-investigators on the project include Dr. Velma McBride Murry, Dr. Gene Brody, and Dr. Steven Kogan of the University of Georgia. Dr. Tera Hurt is program director. To enroll in this program, contact LaTrena Stokes by phone at (706) 542-2204 or 1-866-910-0359, or email at latrena@uga.edu. You can also visit the study website at <http://www.uga.edu/prosaaf/>.