



NEWS RELEASE

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Network of support services helping families to deal with new pressures and challenges

Minister Hanafin opens ACCORD Annual Conference in Galway

“Counselling, for couples whose marriages run into difficulties, may be the glue that helps to hold relationships together. This is why the Government supports the work of ACCORD and similar organisations”.

Opening ACCORD’s Annual Conference in Galway today (Friday 6th March 2009), the Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D. said, **“the proof of the Government’s commitment to supporting strong family life is in my recent announcement of funding of almost €8 million for 29 organisations to provide marriage and relationship counselling services.”**

This funding is provided by the Family Support Agency under the aegis of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

ACCORD provides its family services through a network of 58 Centres nationwide with 360 fully accredited and professionally qualified counsellors and 450 trained and skilled group facilitators. In 2007, ACCORD delivered 52,280 hours of client service to 54,049 men and women. ACCORD, which was established in Ireland in 1975, will receive funding of €3.45 million in 2009. ACCORD provides a range of family services including marriage preparation courses and marriage and relationship counselling services.

Minister Hanafin went on to say, **“the popularity of marriage has increased in the last decade, with 40% more marriages in 2006 than in 1995.**

However, in these economically difficult times, marriages and relationships are facing new pressures and challenges. ACCORD, and



other agencies, working in this area can help couples to meet those challenges.”

Minister Hanafin said, **“children above all benefit from stability and continuity in their family life and from a regular and close relationship with both parents. Marriage makes a major contribution to achieving this goal and, therefore, has always commanded respect and support in Irish society.”**

Minister Hanafin concluded by paying tribute to all those who work with ACCORD, **“I am aware of the huge input into ACCORD made by members on a largely voluntary basis. This allows ACCORD to provide a direct service to clients based on their needs as opposed to their ability to pay. These members are a huge asset to the organisation and have played a significant role in making ACCORD what it is today.”**

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