



U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: Idaho

www.fatherhood.gov

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Idaho

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

Idaho does not use state funds to promote marriage activities directly, but funds from other sources are used for this purpose. For example, in 2003, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded a five-year grant to the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and Healthy Families Nampa to encourage healthy relationships in the city of Nampa. Healthy Families Nampa, a coalition of civic, educational, business, religious, and ethnic leaders and organizations, targets low-income couples to improve relationships, decrease divorces, and reduce the need for child and other support services. Unmarried and married couples are eligible for curriculum-based premarital counseling, relationship skills education, parenting education, and conflict resolution and problem-solving education.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

In 2006, the governor of Idaho declared Celebration of Marriage Week to highlight the role that marriage plays in forming healthy families. In addition, Healthy Families Nampa offers marriage enrichment sessions for already-married couples.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Recent funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has been provided to Catholic Charities of Idaho for the Idaho Dads Matter! program. This program offers job-readiness training, job-placement assistance, financial literacy sessions, and training in parenting skills and conflict resolution to noncustodial fathers to help them become more involved in their children's lives and pay child support more regularly.ⁱⁱⁱ

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

The Governor's Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention, an abstinence education program, is designed to prevent or postpone sexual activity, to decrease the number of teen pregnancies in the state, and to reduce the occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases. Toward these ends, the council sponsors a statewide media campaign promoting abstinence, collaborates with community-based programs to implement promising practices, and provides communities and schools with educational resources. Local health departments also have worked to develop community-based programs and to collaborate with civic organizations, schools, and individuals to prevent early childbearing.^{iv}

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



The Family and Medical Leave Act

Idaho has a Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which allows both fathers and mothers time off after the birth or adoption of a child, or during an illness, without fear of losing their jobs. Parents are entitled to up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave over a one-year period to care for a new child, an ill family member, or to recover from their own illness. The FMLA protects fathers and mothers who have worked with the same organization for at least one year and have worked at least 1,250 hours within the past year. Idaho has no provisions for paid leave.^v

Domestic Violence Services

The Idaho Council on Domestic Violence and Victim Assistance, founded in 1982, provides funding to community-based programs that provide services and advocacy to victims of domestic violence. These programs provide crisis hotlines, support groups, educational programs, emergency and transitional housing, advocacy services, and social service referrals. The council also provides funding to several batterer treatment programs in the state.^{vi}

Child Custody Policy

When married couples with children separate voluntarily, both parents have the right to petition the Idaho Family Court system to determine the custody of their children. Idaho has a presumption of or preference for joint custody.^{vii}

Paternity Establishment

Paternity establishment provides a child born outside of marriage with the same rights as a child born to married parents; moreover, it ensures that the child has a right to inheritances, Social Security benefits, health insurance, workers' compensation, and veterans' benefits. Idaho has an in-hospital paternity acknowledgment program. When paternity is uncontested, both parents may sign an Acknowledgment of Paternity Affidavit. When one parent is unwilling to voluntarily sign this affidavit, parents can be required to undergo genetic testing or to work with the court system to establish legal paternity.^{viii}

Child Support Assistance

The Child Support Enforcement System has as its primary objectives: 1) to ensure that children have the financial support of both their parents; 2) to foster parents' responsible behavior towards their children; and 3) to reduce welfare costs associated with child support delinquency. Idaho operates a child support program through its Department of Health and Welfare. The state's Child Support Services office aims to promote children's well-being, parental involvement, and families' self-sufficiency by ensuring that parents provide financial and medical support for their children. If a noncustodial parent is unable to pay his or her child support, Child Support Services will help the parent improve his or her job skills with the long-term goal of increasing earning power.^{ix}

Child Support Enforcement

Idaho uses several punitive methods against noncustodial parents who fail to pay child support. The state may withhold income, intercept tax refunds, or report debts to credit agencies. Furthermore, when a parent is 90 days delinquent in payment or owes arrears greater than \$2,000, the state may restrict the parent's driver's, professional, occupational, business, or recreational licenses.^x

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

Idaho offers welfare benefits to two-parent families on the same basis as to single-parent families. Needy families can receive benefits through the Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho (TAFI) program. There is a 24-month limit on receipt of benefits, and recipients must participate in work activities immediately upon enrolling in the program. However, educational and training activities can fulfill this work requirement for up to 12 months.^{xi}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

The office of Child Support Services offers job training programs to noncustodial fathers to help them provide their children with financial support. Moreover, incarcerated fathers may be able to participate in programs designed to enhance their parenting behavior.^{xii}

Job Training and Employment Services

Fathers who are trying to become economically self-sufficient may be eligible to receive services from the Centers for New Directions, which provide career counseling and assessments, life-skills training, employment readiness classes, and support services.^{xiii} Furthermore, fathers may be eligible for job-search assistance, career counseling, skills training, and follow-up services under the Workforce Investment Act.^{xiv}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

Idaho offers a number of parenting programs for fathers incarcerated in state correctional facilities. Long Distance Dads, a peer-led program, offers lessons on communicating with children, dealing with other caregivers, fathers' roles in their families, and maintaining relationships with children during incarceration. Moreover, The Fathers as Teachers Helping, Encouraging, Reading, Supporting (F.A.T.H.E.R.S) program helps incarcerated fathers deal with parenting challenges; other programs offer parenting advice and literacy skills.^{xv}



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