



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

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: Maryland

July 2008



www.fatherhood.gov

Maryland

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

Maryland uses both state funds and federal funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to support the Baltimore Healthy Marriage Project, which aims to help low-income unwed parents develop the communication, conflict resolution, and family planning skills necessary to create strong relationships.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

In addition to the Baltimore Healthy Marriage Project, the ACF also provides funding to Northwood-Appold United Methodist Church, located in Baltimore, to develop a public advertising campaign on the value of marriage and the skills needed for successful marriages.ⁱⁱ Maryland's Institute for Family Education, a nonprofit organization, offers parenting and relationship classes, as well as workshops and seminars to help parents, couples, and individuals create healthy relationships and families.ⁱⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Maryland's Fatherhood Initiative promotes responsible fatherhood efforts in the state. The state's Department of Human Resources operates several programs under this initiative and also awards funding to father-focused programs that provide services such as parenting skills training, activities, education, mentoring, and counseling.^{iv} In addition, Maryland's Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development operates the Men's Services Responsible Fatherhood Program.^v

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

Maryland funds several teen pregnancy prevention programs and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recently has authorized increased funds for groups establishing or expanding programs to prevent at-risk teens from having or fathering babies. Currently, the Maryland Family Planning program provides teen pregnancy prevention services and reproductive health services at more than 80 clinics in the state. The Healthy Teens and Young Adults program offers pregnancy prevention services to thousands of Maryland residents. The Maryland Abstinence Education and Coordination Program educates adolescents about abstinence.^{vi}

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



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The Family and Medical Leave Act

Maryland is subject to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, which requires employers with 50 or more employees to offer up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to parents upon the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from an illness, or to care for an ill family member. The FMLA protects the jobs of parents who have worked with the same organization for at least one year and have worked at least 1,250 hours within the past year.^{vii}

Domestic Violence Services

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence is the state's coalition to end domestic violence through education, training, and advocacy. The coalition works with local domestic violence programs, law enforcement agencies, legal advocates, health care providers, and businesses. Maryland also has an address confidentiality program for victims of domestic violence.^{viii}

Child Custody Policy

Maryland law does not favor either the mother or the father when determining custody of the child. The court examines the relationship of each parent with the child and then makes a custody decision based on the child's best interest. The court can also order mediation for parents who cannot agree on child custody.^{ix}

Paternity Establishment

In Maryland, children born to unwed parents do not automatically have a legally recognized father. Establishing legal paternity is important because it gives a child born to unmarried parents the same rights as a child born to married parents. These rights include eligibility for Social Security benefits, veterans' benefits, health insurance, life insurance, and inheritance. At the time of birth, the father may sign an Affidavit of Parentage in the hospital to legally establish paternity. If the father signs the affidavit form at a later date, a notary public must be present. This form can be signed up until the child's 18th birthday. If the father refuses to acknowledge paternity and sign the form, the Child Support Program can assist in establishing paternity.^x

Child Support Assistance

Maryland's Department of Human Resources manages the Child Support Program. This program seeks to improve the standard of living for children by enforcing their right to receive proper child support from both parents. The program will assist Maryland families in collecting child support if paternity of the child has been established. If the family does not receive financial or medical assistance, a \$25 fee must be paid to the Child Support Program for its services.^{xi}

Child Support Enforcement

The Child Support Program helps families collect child support from noncustodial parents. Available services include searching for the other parent, legally establishing paternity, obtaining court orders for child support, enforcing court orders, collecting child support payments, and reviewing or changing child support payment amounts. The program can collect money from an uncooperative parent by withholding child support payments from paychecks and tax refunds, reporting the parent to child support arrears or credit bureaus, suspending the parent's driver's license, seizing Maryland lottery winnings, filing contempt of court actions, or referring the case for prosecution.^{xii}



Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

Maryland's Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) program provides cash assistance to families with children under the age of 18. The state also has an Emergency Assistance to Families with Children (EAFIC) program to provide families with emergency cash. Programs also exist to provide low-income residents with assistance for energy bills.^{xiii} Maryland's Welfare-to-Work program encourages families to become independent through obtaining employment, assuming family responsibility, and becoming involved in the community, while helping the families in the meantime.^{xiv}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

Maryland's Access and Visitation Program receives funding from the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement to provide services for noncustodial fathers. Services include mediation, visitation with their children, neutral drop-off sites, counseling, and support group activities.^{xv} Another project, the Absent Parent Program, offers job training and employment services to noncustodial parents to help these parents meet child support payments.^{xvi} The Partners for Fragile Families Program is designed for low-income fathers between the ages of 16 and 26. Services include parenting skills education, job training, job placement, and substance abuse counseling.^{xvii} The Young Fathers-Responsible Fathers Program is another initiative whose goal is to provide educational and employment opportunities and emotional support to fathers so that they can be a positive influence in their children's lives.^{xviii}

Job Training and Employment Services

Maryland offers several job training and employment services for fathers. The Family and Children's Services program provides vocational skills training, job-search skills training, and job placement assistance for adolescent fathers. Another program, Fathers Assuming Responsibility, helps fathers and expectant fathers with literacy, job readiness, job training, and job-search skills.^{xix}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

The ACF funds the Winning Fathers program targeted at currently or formerly incarcerated fathers and their families. The Department of Human Resources administers the program, which focuses on improving relationship skills, providing counseling to children, controlling aggression, learning responsible parenting, and increasing child support payments.^{xx}

Resources

- **Maryland Department of Human Resources.** This Web site provides an overview of state services available to families and fatherhood and parenting programs; available at <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/index.html>.
- **Administration for Children and Families.** This Web site provides information on currently funded marriage and fatherhood programs in Maryland; available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/hmabstracts/>.

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