



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

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: Montana

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www.fatherhood.gov

Montana

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

Montana does not use state funds for marriage promotion activities. However, pilot marriage programs funded by the federal government and nongovernmental sponsors are available in the state. For example, as a result of federal legislation providing financial support for healthy marriage activities, a number of organizations in Montana have received funds to provide premarital education, marriage skills training, counseling, and other services to engaged couples and to couples who are interested in marriage.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded funding for two healthy marriage programs in Montana. The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council has received funds to support the Improving the Well-Being of Children – Native American Health Marriage Initiative, and the Native Wellness Institute has received funding for a program called Leading the Next Generation.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

The Partnership to Strengthen Families is a statewide interagency effort that draws on public and private funding to offer one-on-one home visits with families under stress. The goal of the partnership is to strengthen parenting skills and household management skills, especially in abusive homes. The project provides services to all families, including those with teen fathers, single fathers, and fathers of children with disabilities.ⁱⁱⁱ

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

Montana seeks to prevent unwanted pregnancies for young people through public schools and collaboration between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and family planning programs.^{iv}

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



The Family and Medical Leave Act

Montana 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. Montana's family and medical leave policy allows fathers and mothers working in the public sector to take up to three weeks of unpaid leave in connection with the adoption of a child. Private-sector employers must allow employees a reasonable amount of time for leave of absence or sick leave in connection with the birth of a child.^v

Domestic Violence Services

The Partnership to Strengthen Families, mentioned previously, helps to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and abuse by helping parents in households that are under stress to improve their parenting and household management skills.^{vi}

Child Custody Policy

In a divorce, legal separation, or paternity case, each parent must file a parenting plan that the court will use to make decisions about child support, custody, and visitation.^{vii} Parents seeking an end to their union may be ordered to take a course on the effects of divorce on children.^{viii}

Paternity Establishment

Paternity establishment ensures a child's right to a range of public benefits, including survivor's insurance, education, health care, and workers' compensation; and establishing paternity gives a child born outside of marriage the same legal rights as a child born to married parents. In Montana, the husband of a married mother is considered the legal father of a child. When an unmarried mother gives birth, hospital staff members offer the parents an Acknowledgement of Paternity affidavit to sign indicating that the man is the legal father. This affidavit can also be signed at a later time. When paternity is in question, the Department of Public Health and Human Services, Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) will help the mother through the appropriate processes. Under Montana law, the man is presumed to be the father if the results of a genetic test show at least a 95 percent probability that this is the case.^{ix}

Child Support Assistance

Parents with problems relating to child support can contact the state's CSED for assistance.

Child Support Enforcement

Montana's CSED serves parents by locating absent parents, establishing paternity, establishing financial and medical support orders, enforcing current and past-due child support orders, offering medical and spousal support, and modifying child support orders. Individuals who receive public assistance under TANF are automatically referred to the CSED. Support owed to the family is automatically assigned to the state as a condition of TANF. When the child support payment is collected, it is used to reimburse the state and federal governments for welfare benefits paid to the family.^x

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

Montana offers welfare benefits to two-parent families on the same basis as to single-parent families. The state imposes a lifetime limit of 60 months on the receipt of benefits. Parents must begin participating in work activities 24 months after receiving benefits. Education and training can partially fulfill this work requirement, but the recipient must also work at least 10 hours a week while participating in that education or training.^{xi}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

The ACF has provided funding to the Women's Opportunity and Resource Development, Inc. (WORD), to create a Center for Young Fathers in Missoula County. This program will help fathers ages 15-24 improve their economic status by providing job-search assistance, job training, subsidized employment, and career advancement education; coordinating with existing employment services; disseminating employment materials; and offering financial planning that encompasses household management, banking, and budgeting.^{xii}

Job Training and Employment Services

Job training and linkage is provided throughout the state for low-income, noncustodial fathers.^{xiii}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

No special services or programs were found for incarcerated fathers in Montana.

Resources

- **State Initiatives to Encourage Responsible Fatherhood, 1999 Edition.** This report provides information about Montana's Partnership to Strengthen Families, which seeks to strengthen parenting and household management skills, in the interest of reducing domestic violence and abuse; available online at http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_439.html.



References

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- ^{xi} National Center for Children in Poverty (2006). *Montana: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance*. Accessed online 6/29/07 from http://www.nccp.org/profiles/MT_profile_36.html.
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