



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

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: North Carolina

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www.fatherhood.gov

North Carolina

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Promotion Activities

North Carolina provides funding for marriage preparation and promotion activities, in conjunction with federal funding, through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. Locally, family resource centers offer marriage promotion programs. Additional marriage preparation programs funded by the federal government and by nongovernmental sponsors are available in the state. These programs seek to provide marriage and relationship-skills training to unmarried expectant parents, with the aim of strengthening their relationships.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

Although North Carolina does not have its own healthy marriage initiative, the state uses federal funding through TANF to support programs that promote marriage, encourage unmarried parents to marry, and encourage married couples to stay together. Similarly, a healthy marriage demonstration grant awarded through the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services funds services in the state for unmarried expectant parents, as well as services to help strengthen the relationships of married parents.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

North Carolina allocates a portion of federal funds and TANF program money for fatherhood initiatives across the state. Although the state does not sponsor an official statewide fatherhood initiative, state and federal funding is used to fund fatherhood programs in local family resource centers. The North Carolina Department of Correction offers a program for incarcerated fathers and expectant fathers to assist them in reconnecting with their children. Local community-based organizations offer additional direct-service parenting and fatherhood programs through a federal Responsible Fatherhood demonstration grant.ⁱⁱⁱ

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

Under the aegis of the Division of Public Health, North Carolina uses some federal and state TANF funds to support efforts aimed at preventing and reducing out-of-wedlock births. The state also has launched an initiative to prevent teen pregnancy. The initiative encompasses two programs,

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



one directed at preventing teen pregnancy, the other directed at providing support for teens who already are parents. These programs provide services through schools and other community-based organizations.^{iv}

The Family and Medical Leave Act

North Carolina does not provide any extensions to the federal 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. The federal law entitles parents 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. North Carolina has no state provisions for paid leave.^v

Domestic Violence Services

The Council for Women/Domestic Violence Commission, which is under the auspices of North Carolina's Department of Administration, provides grants to abuser treatment, displaced homemaker, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs that provide shelter, education, and employment services. North Carolina also uses TANF funds to conduct domestic violence assessments of TANF recipients and to provide service referrals where necessary.^{vi}

Child Custody Policy

When married couples with children divorce voluntarily, both parents have the right to petition any North Carolina circuit court to determine the custody of their children. Custody decisions are made in the best interest of the children, which includes factors such as the age of the children and each parent's ability to care for them.^{vii}

Paternity Establishment

North Carolina has a voluntary paternity acknowledgement process in which the mother and father complete an Affidavit of Parentage form. When paternity is contested, the parties involved must go through a judicial process in which the alleged father may have to participate in genetic testing.^{viii}

Child Support Assistance

The state operates a child support program through its Division of Social Services Child Support Enforcement (CSE). The purpose of the program is to ensure that children receive financial support from both parents. CSE will help locate parents, establish paternity, file support orders, and receive payment after orders have been set. North Carolina does not have any state-funded programs that provide services to noncustodial parents unable to pay their child support.^{ix}

Child Support Enforcement

The state uses a number of strategies to enforce payment from noncustodial parents who do not pay child support. The state can seize child support payments from wages, unemployment benefits, workers' compensation benefits, veterans' disability benefits, and federal or state tax refunds. In addition, the state may place liens on property, report the parent's unpaid payments to credit bureaus, and file contempt-of-court actions.^x



Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

The state offers welfare benefits to two-parent families on the same basis as to single-parent families. To receive these benefits, families must register with First Stop Employment Assistance (FSEA). Once families begin participating in FSEA, they can receive benefits for up to 24 months. Families that reach the 24-month limit are ineligible to receive benefits for another three years.^{xi}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

North Carolina's state TANF plan allows for the use of TANF funds for child support initiatives, including fatherhood programs targeted at noncustodial parents. Additional services for low-income noncustodial fathers in the state are funded through federal Responsible Fatherhood initiative grants. Operation Breakthrough, a federally funded program, targets noncustodial fathers with children enrolled in Head Start and aims to improve child-parent relationships.^{xii}

Job Training and Employment Services

First Stop Employment offers job training and placement through North Carolina's TANF program. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services also offers vocational training for individuals with disabilities. Local family resource centers may provide additional employment-related services.^{xiii}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

The state's Department of Correction provides a number of programs and services to facilitate inmates' transition out of incarceration. For example, the Going Home program provides parenting instruction for incarcerated fathers, and other programs provide educational and employment services.^{xiv}

Resources

- **Fatherhood Resource Center.** This Web site provides links to fatherhood initiatives and resources across North Carolina and around the country; available at <http://wch.dhhs.state.nc.us/Fatherhood%20Initiatives%20and%20Resource%20Websites.html>



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