

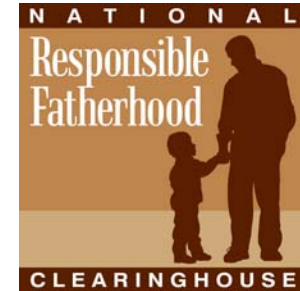


U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: North Dakota

www.fatherhood.gov

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North Dakota

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

North Dakota does not fund marriage preparation activities with state funds. However, to encourage marriage in single-parent families, the state does not include the income of a new spouse in determining the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefit for six months following marriage.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has recently provided funding for healthy marriage programs offered by community organizations. For example, the St. Ann's Native American Healthy Marriages Initiative will provide relationship skills education to families and youth to promote healthy, strong relationships.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

North Dakota's Department of Human Services provides family preservation services to parents at risk of abusing their children. These services include parent education and counseling. In addition to this state-funded program, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides funding for programs offered by community organizations that encourage responsible fatherhood. Incorporating father participation in early childhood education and Head Start programs and providing parenting education are two ways these programs promote responsible fatherhood.ⁱⁱⁱ

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

Through the Department of Health and the Department of Human Services, North Dakota provides an out-of-wedlock pregnancy prevention training package to individuals and centers receiving TANF funding. The training package, which includes an Abstinence Education Program and family planning information, is also made available to other public and private entities.^{iv}

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



The Family and Medical Leave Act

North Dakota follows the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, which allows both fathers and mothers to take 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. North Dakota provides 12 weeks of paid leave for employees in the public sector but does not require private-sector employers to provide paid leave.^v

Domestic Violence Services

The Division of Injury Prevention and Control, a unit of the Department of Health, houses the state's Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Program. In collaboration with other state and local agencies, the program provides funding to projects addressing domestic violence issues and to direct service centers for victims of domestic violence. North Dakota also uses federal funding provided under the Violence Against Women Act (enacted in 1994 and reauthorized in 2006) to fund local government and community-based domestic violence programs.^{vi}

Child Custody Policy

Upon the voluntary separation of married couples, both parents have the right to petition the North Dakota court system to determine child custody arrangements. Custody decisions are made in the best interest of the child, which take into account the child's physical, emotional, and mental needs.^{vii}

Paternity Establishment

North Dakota has a voluntary paternity acknowledgement program. If paternity is undisputed, the father may sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity form at the time of the child's birth. If there are doubts about a child's paternity, the court system can order genetic testing to ascertain paternity.^{viii}

Child Support Assistance

The North Dakota Child Support Enforcement Services program is responsible for ensuring that all children receive financial and medical support from both of their parents. The program helps custodial parents who do not have child support orders establish an order, as well as helps to establish paternity, modify orders, locate noncustodial parents, and collect and distribute child support payments. Either parent may request services from Child Support Enforcement.^{ix}

Child Support Enforcement

If a noncustodial parent does not pay child support, North Dakota Child Support Enforcement Services will withhold income, place liens on bank accounts and property, intercept tax refunds and lottery winnings, freeze or seize real and personal property, suspend licenses and vehicle registrations, and charge the parent with contempt. The state may also report the debt to credit bureaus or revoke the noncustodial parent's passport.^x

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

In North Dakota, parents receiving financial support through TANF must participate in work activities upon receiving benefits for 24 months. Moreover, adults can receive benefits for no more than 60 months in their lifetime. Participation in the Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) program is required of TANF recipients, unless they have been determined to be exempt from this requirement.^{xi}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

Programs funded through Responsible Fatherhood Initiative grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services target low-income and noncustodial fathers. These programs reach fathers through early childhood education programs, such as Head Start, and encourage fathers to participate actively in their young children's lives.^{xii}

Job Training and Employment Services

Job Service North Dakota funds job training and employment services under the state's Workforce Investment Act. Educational and vocational training, along with job-search assistance, are provided at the local level. Additionally, as mentioned, TANF recipients are required to participate in the JOBS program, which provides job placement or educational and training services.^{xiii}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

North Dakota Department of Correction and Rehabilitation provides job skills, personal and career development, and vocational training to inmates in the North Dakota correctional system to help them find employment after their release. However, none of these services and programs is targeted specifically at incarcerated fathers.^{xiv}

Resources

- **National Center for Children in Poverty.** This Web site provides an overview of policies related to children and families, including welfare benefits and family leave, in the state of North Dakota; available at http://www.nccp.org/profiles/index_ND.html
- **Survey of State Child Support Policies, Procedures, and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers.** This report, published by the Center for Policy Research, provides a summary of nationwide fatherhood policies for incarcerated men; available at: <https://childsupport.state.co.us/siteuser/do/general/GetPDF?PDFNumber=39>



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