



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

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: Oregon

www.fatherhood.gov

July 2008



Oregon

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

Recently-allocated funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has enabled community organizations to provide marriage education programs to Oregon residents. For example, Samaritan Counseling Centers will offer premarital education and marriage skills training to unmarried couples in order to help participants develop communication and conflict resolution skills. Furthermore, Northwest Family Services will conduct a media campaign on the value of marriage in the Portland, OR, area; offer relationship skills education to high school and college students; provide marriage education to unmarried parents and engaged couples.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

As part of their grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Samaritan Counseling Centers and Northwest Family Services will offer healthy marriage education and marriage skills training to married couples as well as to unmarried couples. These trainings will help couples develop and improve their relationships as well as their communication skills and conflict resolution skills.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provided funding to community organizations offering responsible fatherhood programs in Oregon. The South Coast Business Employment Corporation received funding for its Strong Dads Show Kids You Care program, which uses the Incredible Years curriculum to provide parenting education to fathers. The program also offers job training and job search assistance, life skills and relationship skills training, one-on-one vocational counseling, on-the-job training, and other job preparation services.ⁱⁱⁱ

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

Oregon has a number of programs and committees designed to decrease teenage pregnancy rates. The Teen Pregnancy Prevention/Sexual Health Partnership is a statewide committee comprised of employees of public and private agencies. The Partnership analyzes data, conducts surveys, holds local forums, and helps teens conduct community research in order to better understand teen pregnancy and teen sexual behavior in Oregon.^{iv} The Oregon Teen Pregnancy Task Force (OTPTF) encourages communication and awareness about teen pregnancy and parenting.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

The OTPTF is designed to support statewide efforts to delay unintended teen pregnancies; encourage networking between providers; offer educational opportunities for those working with teens; and provide information about teen pregnancy to state agencies and legislators. Among other activities, the OTPTF holds an annual training conference for practitioners, policy makers, and teens.^v

The state has developed a seven-pronged Action Agenda designed to prevent teen pregnancy and parenting. This blueprint includes comprehensive sexuality education, abstinence education, access to contraception, and services for young parents. The Action Agenda also promotes the inclusion of young males in pregnancy prevention through health and sexuality education and male-involvement activities to encourage healthy decision making. As part of this goal, Oregon has provided funding to a number of local male-involvement pilot programs.^{vi} Additionally, the Oregon Family Planning Program offers reproductive health and family planning services to men and women across the state.^{vii}

The Family and Medical Leave Act

Oregon requires all public and private employers with 25 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 a serious illness, or to care for an ill child or family member. If a parent takes 12 weeks of leave for the birth or adoption of a child, he or she is eligible for an additional 12 weeks of leave to care for an ill child. Furthermore, a female employee may take up to 12 weeks of leave for an illness, injury, or condition related to pregnancy or childbirth. In order to be eligible for family leave, an employee must have worked for at least an average of 25 hours per week during the 180 days prior to the commencement of leave.^{viii}

Domestic Violence Services

The Oregon Department of Human Services provides grants to 34 community-based programs that provide crisis hotlines, emergency shelters, and support services to victims of domestic violence.^{ix} Furthermore, the Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Council, composed of 15 individuals from government agencies and from community domestic violence programs, was established in 2002 to enhance services offered through the Department of Human Services and to coordinate communities' response to domestic violence issues. This council promotes practices and policies that improve domestic violence services and increases communication between government agencies and community partners.^x Oregon also has an address confidentiality program that shields the addresses of domestic violence survivors so that batterers cannot use public records to locate victims.^{xi}

Child Custody Policy

Oregon has no preference or presumption for joint custody; instead, custody decisions are based upon the best interests of the child.^{xii} Among other factors, this may include which parent has been the primary caregiver; each parent's attitude towards the child; any previous abuse; each parent's criminal record; the home environment; each parent's emotional stability; and the child's wishes.^{xiii} In cases involving child custody, Oregon requires that parents establish a parenting plan that states how much time the child or children will spend with each parent; parenting plans may also include more details about specific parenting tasks. If parents are unable to formulate a parenting plan independently, the court may order them to participate in mediation.^{xiv}



Paternity Establishment

Establishing paternity for a child born outside of marriage provides the child with certain rights, such as rights to Social Security benefits, life insurance benefits, veterans' benefits, and inheritance rights; provides the child with a sense of identity; and allows for the establishment of child support orders. In Oregon, unmarried parents can voluntarily establish paternity by completing a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity affidavit after the child's birth. If one parent refuses to sign this affidavit, the other may work with the Division of Child Support or with the court system to determine and establish paternity. In such cases, the mother, child, and alleged father may be required to undergo genetic testing.^{xv}

Child Support Assistance

The Oregon Division of Child Support (DCS) is designed to ensure that children receive support from their parents as well as to encourage family self-sufficiency.^{xvi} DCS helps custodial parents locate noncustodial parents, establishes paternity, establishes and modifies child support orders, distributes child support payments, and enforces orders when necessary.^{xvii} DCS provides grants to local agencies that provide parents with supervised visitation and with neutral exchange sites in order to increase visitation between children and noncustodial parents.^{xviii}

Child Support Enforcement

The Oregon Division of Child Support may take a number of steps against noncustodial parents who do not pay their child support orders. DCS may withhold income; collect the parent's unemployment, worker's compensation, or other benefits; intercept federal and state tax refunds; place a lien on the parent's property; garnish bank accounts, lottery winnings, inheritances, or insurance settlements; or report the parent's debt to credit bureaus. When a noncustodial parent owes at least \$2,500 in unpaid support, the state may suspend the parent's driver's or occupational license. Furthermore, the nonpaying parent can be held in contempt of court and fined or sentenced to jail.^{xix}

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Benefits

In Oregon, low-income families receive cash assistance through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. There is a 60-month lifetime limit on receipt of TANF benefits. However, benefits can be extended when a recipient is the victim of domestic violence; has a physical or learning disability; has a drug or mental health condition that prevents the recipient from remaining employed; is caring for a disabled family member; has a disabled child that prevents the parent from remaining employed; or has suffered extreme cruelty.^{xx} Two-parent families face stricter eligibility requirements for TANF than single-parent families.^{xxi}

Most adults who receive TANF benefits are required to participate in the JOBS for Oregon's Future (JOBS) employment and training program. The JOBS program also provides skills assessments to individuals applying for public benefits in order to divert families from receiving TANF when possible.^{xxii}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

A number of programs are specifically offered to noncustodial fathers who are currently institutionalized or have been institutionalized in the past. These programs, such as Children of Incarcerated Parents, offer services and supports to noncustodial fathers of minor children.^{xxiii} DCS also supports services to increase contact between noncustodial parents and children.^{xxiv}

Job Training and Employment Services

Low-income individuals who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits participate in the JOBS for Oregon's Future (JOBS) program. JOBS offers detailed employment assessments, workplace training, job training, job search assistance, and other support services. JOBS Plus, one part of the JOBS program, places clients in paid, temporary training positions in order to improve work skills and job readiness. JOBS also provides skills assessments to individuals applying for public benefits in order to help families avoid receiving TANF and public assistance in the first place.^{xxv}

Oregon also operates a number of One-Stop centers that offer job search assistance, referrals, employment assessments, and other employment-related services to Oregon residents.^{xxvi} State agencies also have collaborated with community organizations to develop WorkSource Oregon, an organization that offers additional training workshops and job search assistance.^{xxvii}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

The Oregon Department of Corrections operates the Children of Incarcerated Parents Project, designed to prevent children of incarcerated parents from becoming involved with the criminal justice system. This project includes regular interactions between children and their incarcerated parents; inmates also participate in parenting education sessions designed to improve their parenting skills.^{xxviii} The project's Parenting Inside/Out curriculum teaches inmates about communication skills, child development, healthy relationships, individuality, and other parenting skills. This 90-hour parenting curriculum is currently offered at eight state correctional facilities.^{xxix}

Resources

- **Oregon's Blueprint for Success.** This document provides information about Oregon's state plan to prevent teenage pregnancy and includes information about the male involvement component of the program; available at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/teens/tpp/blueprint.shtml>

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