



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

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: New York

www.fatherhood.gov

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New York

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

New York does not directly use state funds to support marriage preparation activities. However, marriage preparation programs are available in the state through the designation of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancy, promote employment, and support two-parent families. The federal government's Healthy Marriage demonstration grants also are used to support marriage preparation programs in the state. These programs offer marriage education, as well as marriage skills and relationship skills programs. In addition, nongovernmental organizations, such as the Healthy Marriage Coalition, provide marriage preparation services in the state.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

The New York State TANF plan designates that TANF funds can be used not only for marriage preparation activities but also for marriage "maintenance" efforts. In addition to this marriage initiative, the state's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance provides "overarching support" to the recipients of grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services within the state in order to encourage the programs' collaboration and increase their ability to serve fathers. And the federal government's Healthy Marriage initiative provides grants to organizations in New York that offer relationship, marriage, and parenting skills programs to couples who already are married.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

The state's Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance is sponsoring five pilot programs under its Responsible Fatherhood Initiative. These pilot programs offer guidance and training to low-income noncustodial fathers on healthy marriage, responsible parenting, and enhancing economic stability. The office also provides support to local, community-based, and federally funded responsible fatherhood programs throughout the state. The City of New York's Department of Youth and Community Development

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sponsors its own fatherhood and parent education initiatives. As part of these initiatives, eligible community-based organizations in the city offer programs, workshops, and services. There are currently seven responsible fatherhood programs funded through federal Responsible Fatherhood grants within the state that serve young, incarcerated, and low-income fathers. Several community-based organizations receive more flexible federal funding to work with noncustodial low-income fathers on access and visitation issues.ⁱⁱⁱ

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

New York supports the Flexible Fund for Family Services through TANF, which provides funding for pregnancy prevention services. For example, through the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention and Services program, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services provides funding to local and community-based organizations that provide services to at-risk, pregnant, and parenting adolescents. A number of programs run by community-based organizations target teen fathers and at-risk young men and provide education, prevention, counseling, and mentoring services.^{iv}

The Family and Medical Leave Act

New York has a Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), which prohibits discrimination in child care leave in cases of adoption and provides for partial wage replacement during leave in the public and private sectors. These provisions constitute additions to those in the federal FMLA, which allows eligible employees to take time off after the birth or adoption of a child, or during an illness, without fear of losing their jobs. Under the federal law, 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 law 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.^v

Domestic Violence Services

With the assistance of federal funding through the Violence Against Women Act, the New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence sponsors shelters, hotlines, and education geared toward preventing domestic violence and helping its victims across the state. Additionally, New York designates state and private funds for domestic violence and sexual assault services at the state and local levels through the Office of Children and Family Services, Crime Victims Board, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and the Department of Health.^{vi}

Child Custody Policy

Recently introduced legislation into the New York State Assembly has modified the older child custody law. Now, upon parental separation or divorce in the state, there is a “statutory presumption of joint custody for all minor children whose parents are no longer married.” The child custody reform act establishes statewide standards and provides for court- directed mediation in child custody litigation.^{vii}



Paternity Establishment

In the case of unmarried couples, paternity can be established through a voluntary acknowledgement of paternity form. In the case of unknown paternity, a mother can file a paternity petition form that requests court assistance in determining the father's identity through DNA testing. Child support staff from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance in the Division of Child Support Enforcement can assist with both these forms.^{viii}

Child Support Assistance

The Division of Child Support Enforcement is responsible for collecting child support payments in the state. For fathers who are unable to pay child support, employment services are offered at a variety of sites. As noted, the responsible fatherhood initiative in New York sponsors five pilot programs that offer employment services as a part of their programs. In addition, the New York City Child Enforcement Program sponsors an employment program that provides job training and placement services for fathers who are unable to pay their child support. The Step Through Employment Program (STEP), as the program is called, is offered in conjunction with community-based organizations and the Family Court.^{ix}

Child Support Enforcement

The Division of Child Support Enforcement is equipped with a variety of tools to enforce the collection of child support payments. To induce payment, the division can revoke the driver's license and passport of a noncustodial parent who does not pay child support; can collect owed child support from the noncustodial parent's paycheck or tax refund; and can place liens on his or her property and/or bank accounts. If these methods continue to be unsuccessful in collecting child support, the division's support collection unit will assist in recommending that the parent be remanded to court.^x

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

New York offers temporary financial support to two-parent families as well as to single-parent families through its Family Assistance Program. Adult beneficiaries must be working or involved in work-like activities after receiving benefits for at least two years, and parents must help any local social services office in locating an absent parent.^{xi}

Services Geared Toward Low Income Noncustodial Fathers

The New York Responsible Fatherhood Initiative currently sponsors five pilot programs targeted at improving the education and employment of low-income noncustodial fathers, as noted previously. New York City's fatherhood initiative funds community-based organization throughout the city that offer educational and employment services as well. Fatherhood programs offered through community-based organizations and funded by the federal government offer educational and employment services targeting



noncustodial fathers, teen fathers, incarcerated fathers, and fathers with current or previous involvement with the criminal system. Community-based organizations currently are receiving federal funding to offer counseling, mediation, education, and other services to increase parents' visitation with their children.^{xii}

Job Training and Employment Services

Job training and employment services are available to low-income noncustodial fathers through the five pilot programs sponsored by the New York Responsible Fatherhood Initiative. Fathers can receive job training, placement assistance, and GED preparation through these programs. Additional job training and employment services are available to fathers through community-based organizations funded by the federal and New York City fatherhood initiatives.^{xiii}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

Federal fatherhood initiative grants are used to support a number of programs for incarcerated fathers that provide them with the opportunity to participate in parenting education programs. The Osborne Association's Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project, Parent Help, the Fortune Society Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Project, and the FamilyWorks Program, all run by community-based organizations in New York City, provide parenting, relationship, and job-skills education for fathers who are currently or were recently incarcerated.^{xiv}

Resources

- **New York Responsible Fatherhood Initiative.** This Web site provides a general overview of this initiative and the programs and services provided through it; available at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/fatherhood/default.htm>
- **New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.** This Web site provides links to information about New York's Fatherhood Initiative, child support protocols, domestic violence victim support, and temporary assistance; available at <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/>
- **New York City Office of Youth and Community Development.** This Web site offers more information about the Fatherhood Initiative of New York City and the programs funded through it; available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/html/services-family-support-fatherhood.html>

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