



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

www.fatherhood.gov

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: California



Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

California does not use state funds to support marriage preparation activities. However, pilot marriage programs funded by the federal government and by nongovernmental sponsors are available in the state. Some organizations recently received funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide marriage education classes, public awareness campaigns, relationship skills workshops, and support services to unmarried couples with and without children.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

Several community organizations have received federal funds to offer healthy marriage programs to married couples in California. In addition to waging public information campaigns, these organizations offer workshops and programs to help couples improve their communication and relationship skills and to provide counseling and support services to couples who want to maintain healthy relationships. One organization, the California Healthy Marriage Coalition, is working to create a coalition of community organizations that offer marriage programs to ensure that comprehensive marriage education is available across the state.ⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Fathers under the age of 21 who are actively involved in their children's lives can participate in the Adolescent Family Life Program. This program offers health, mental health, educational, employment, prevention, and parent education services to teen parents with the intent of strengthening families and improving adolescents' well-being.ⁱⁱⁱ Fathers who have been paroled from juvenile correctional facilities may participate in the Proud Parenting Program, which includes classroom instruction, family activities, and mentoring directed at breaking the intergenerational cycle of violence.^{iv} Through its Community Challenge Grants Program, California also offers funds to community-based organizations that seek to increase responsible fatherhood and encourage fathers' economic, social and emotional support of their children.^v

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

California funds several programs that work with adolescents and young men at risk for early fatherhood. One program, the Adolescent Sibling Pregnancy Prevention Program, offers case management to the adolescent siblings of pregnant or parenting teens to improve the siblings' economic, educational, and behavioral outcomes; provide more economic and academic opportunities; and increase self-sufficiency.^{vi} In addition, the state's Male Involvement Program works with community organizations and agencies to target teens and young men between the ages of 12 and 24 who are at risk for early or unintended fatherhood. The program aims to reduce teen pregnancy rates by increasing young men's community engagement and helping them understand their role in family planning.^{vii} The state also uses funds from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant to finance a media campaign highlighting men's roles in preventing unwanted or teen pregnancies.

The Family and Medical Leave Act

In addition to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), the California Family Rights Act ensures 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 serious 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.^{viii}

California also provides paid family leave for workers who participate in the State Disability Insurance program; eligible workers are entitled to a maximum of six weeks of partially paid leave, during which they can receive up to \$840 a week.^{ix}

Domestic Violence Services

Under the state's Battered Women Protection Act, passed in 1994, California established the Battered Women Shelter Program. This program provides grants and technical assistance to domestic violence service agencies around the state. These agencies offer a variety of services to domestic violence victims and their children, including 24-hour crisis hotlines, business centers, emergency and transitional housing, legal assistance, advocacy, counseling, and referrals.^x California also keeps the addresses of domestic violence victims confidential so that perpetrators cannot use public records to locate victims.^{xi}

Child Custody Policy

When married couples with children separate voluntarily, both parents have the right to petition the court to determine the custody of the children. For separating and divorcing parents, California Family Court Services programs offer mediation services designed to help resolve child custody and child support issues.^{xii} If parents cannot jointly agree to a custody arrangement, decisions are based upon the best interests of the child.

Paternity Establishment

California has an in-hospital paternity acknowledgement program. Paternity establishment ensures a child's right to a range of public benefits, including survivor's insurance, education, health care, and workers compensation. Establishing paternity gives a child born outside of marriage the same legal rights as a child born to married parents. When paternity is uncontested, parents can establish a child's paternity by signing the Declaration of Paternity. Military fathers who will be deployed at the time of the child's birth can sign a Declaration of Paternity during the pregnancy. In cases in which paternity is contested, parents must go through a judicial process in which the alleged father may have to participate in genetic testing.^{xiii}

Child Support Assistance

The California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) promotes children's well-being and families' self-sufficiency by helping both parents meet their children's financial, social, and emotional needs. The DCSS is charged with establishing child support orders for never-married couples, collecting child support payments, enforcing orders, and distributing child support payments to children and their families. It can also help parents determine and establish paternity for their children.^{xiv} All parents, guardians, and caretakers of children are eligible for DCSS services. Fathers in the state who have a net disposable income of less than \$1,000 a month may be eligible for reduced child support payments.^{xv}

Child Support Enforcement

In cases of child support nonpayment, the state may report the debt to credit bureaus; deny the parent's passport; place liens on property; intercept tax refunds; and take funds from bank accounts, dividends, disability or unemployment benefits, lottery winnings, and property.^{xvi} When fathers have arrears of at least 30 days, the state can revoke their driver's, professional, and business licenses.^{xvii}

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Benefits

California offers cash benefits to low-income families with children under the CalWORKs program. Welfare recipients in one-parent families must participate in work activities for at least 32 hours a week after having received benefits for 18 months. Welfare recipients in two-parent families must participate in work activities for at least 35 hours a week. Education and job training can fulfill at least part of these work requirements. Adults are subject to a 60-month lifetime limit for receipt of benefits; however, eligible children may continue to receive benefits after this point.^{xviii} While the state itself offers no marriage incentives for welfare recipients, the Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians Consortium—a local initiative—offers financial assistance and a one-time marriage bonus to Native American recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) who marry.^{xix}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

California offers parenting programs and support groups to incarcerated and noncustodial fathers.^{xx} In addition, low-income noncustodial fathers are able to modify child support orders by working with the California Department of Child Support Services.

Job Training and Employment Services

Fathers in families receiving CalWORKs benefits are required to participate in the Welfare-to-Work program, which offers job-search services, employment-related services, and educational and training programs. Recipients continue to receive services for up to a year after securing employment. Fathers also may be eligible for intensive services, job-search workshops, and educational programs through the Employment Development Department. For example, the Road to Self-Sufficiency program offers workshops to help public assistance recipients find and retain employment.^{xxi}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

California offers incarcerated fathers at several facilities the opportunity to participate in parenting programs and support groups.^{xxii} In addition, teen fathers and young fathers who have spent time in juvenile correctional facilities can participate in the Proud Parenting Program, which is intended to decrease child maltreatment, increase father involvement, and increase fathers' self-esteem, with the long-term goal of ending the cycle of violence.^{xxiii}

Resources

- **California Department of Social Services.** This Web site provides an overview of state services and policies for families, including information about welfare, protective services, child care, and fatherhood; available at <http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/cdssweb/>
- **National Center for Children in Poverty - California.** This Web site offers information about policies relating to families and children in California; available at http://www.nccp.org/state_detail_CA.html

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