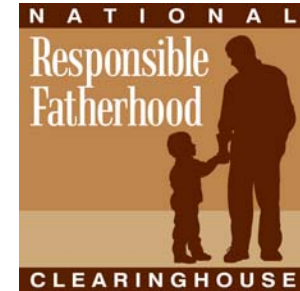




U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: Kentucky

July 2008



www.fatherhood.gov

Kentucky

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities

Kentucky does not use state funds to offer marriage preparation activities.

Other Marriage Initiatives

Recently allocated federal funds have enabled the creation and expansion of a number of healthy marriage programs in Kentucky. For example, the Jefferson County Healthy Marriage Initiative works with low-income married couples to provide marriage enrichment activities and training in conflict resolution skills. Many of the men participating in this program have spent time in a correctional facility. In addition, the Kentucky River Foothills Development Council, Inc., will offer training in financial management and conflict resolution skills to distressed couples through its regional and mobile counseling centers.ⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

Recently allocated funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has allowed community organizations in Kentucky to expand programs aimed at improving men's parenting abilities. One program, the Council on Prevention and Education: Substances (COPES, Inc.), will work with ex-offenders to improve their communication and conflict resolution skills, build their social support system, and increase their knowledge and use of positive parenting skills.ⁱⁱ In addition, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, in partnership with the University of Kentucky, has created a Fatherhood Initiative aimed at fathers involved with protective services. The initiative seeks to increase fathers' involvement in their children's lives through a range of activities.ⁱⁱⁱ These activities include getting fathers to participate in family meetings to discuss their children, providing referrals and services to improve fathers' parenting skills, including fathers as active partners in child-related decisions, conducting surveys of fathers involved in protective services cases, and hosting an annual fatherhood conference.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today



State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

Kentucky provides grants to community organizations that promote sexual abstinence among teenagers.^{iv} The state is also working to increase male involvement in pregnancy prevention and family planning by offering additional services and education to men at family planning clinics and by developing a public awareness campaign to highlight available services.^v At-risk adolescents may be eligible to participate in the Teen Outreach Program, a community service and life-skills program aimed at helping to reduce the teen birth rate. Moreover, married couples earning less than 200 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible to receive family planning services to prevent unintended pregnancies.^{vi}

The Family and Medical Leave Act

Kentucky has a Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), 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. Kentucky has no state provisions for paid leave.^{vii}

Domestic Violence Services

In 2000, the Kentucky General Assembly established a state Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. This council coordinates organizations and agencies responding to domestic violence, promotes community awareness of domestic violence, monitors available services for domestic violence victims, develops local response teams, develops and publishes training curricula and information on treatment programs, and recommends changes in policies and regulations dealing with domestic violence.^{viii} In addition to the Council's work, more than 100 organizations and mental health professionals offer batterer treatment programs.^{ix} Moreover, at least 17 domestic violence programs in Kentucky offer legal advocacy, case management, and emergency and transitional housing assistance; children's services; job-search assistance; counseling; and support groups to victims of domestic violence.^x

Child Custody Policy

When married couples with children divorce, both parents have the right to petition the Kentucky court system to determine custody. In most counties, such cases are referred to family courts. Custody decisions are made based on the best interests of the child, including the parents' wishes, the child's wishes, each parent's relationship with the child, the child's adjustment, each party's mental and physical health, and evidence of domestic violence.^{xi}

In more than one-half of Kentucky's judicial circuits, divorcing parents are required to participate in divorce education. These education programs are designed to help parents understand the consequences of parental conflict on children, manage anger and conflict, increase co-parenting, meet their children's needs, and alleviate children's behavioral and mental issues relating to divorce. Several programs, including Tween Time and Families in Transition, have components specifically for children. In addition, the Turning It Around program works with noncustodial fathers to increase child support payments and to help them improve their relationships with children and former partners.^{xii}



Paternity Establishment

Kentucky 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. Kentucky's Paternity Acknowledgement Program allows unmarried fathers to establish their child's paternity. When paternity is uncontested, parents can sign an acknowledgement of paternity form. If paternity is contested, the mother, alleged father, and child may be required to submit to genetic testing. Paternity may be established at any point until the child's 18th birthday.^{xiii}

Child Support Assistance

The Kentucky Division of Child Support (DCS) strives to ensure that all children receive financial support from both parents. All parents and persons with custody of children are eligible to receive child support services through the DCS. Parents receiving public assistance benefits automatically receive such services, and other parents may receive services by completing an application. The DCS helps custodial parents locate noncustodial parents, establish paternity, establish medical and financial support orders, enforce and collect payments, and review orders for modification.^{xiv}

The full amount of child support payments made to custodial parents who receive cash benefits through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP) is retained by the state to reimburse some of the cost of welfare benefits.^{xv}

Child Support Enforcement

To induce payment of child support, the state may withhold the noncustodial parent's wages, intercept federal and state tax refunds, intercept lottery winnings, or deny a passport.^{xvi} When noncustodial parents have arrears totaling at least six months of child support, the state may suspend the parent's professional, occupational, recreational, or driver's license.^{xvii}

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

Kentucky offers cash benefits to low-income families with children through the Kentucky Transitional Assistance Program (K-TAP). K-TAP recipients must participate in work activities through the Kentucky Works! program for between 20 and 55 hours a week, depending on circumstances. Educational activities may fulfill this work requirement for up to 24 months. Two-parent families receiving benefits face greater work requirements than do single-parent families. Kentucky has a 60-month lifetime limit on receipt of benefits; however, recipients may be eligible to receive extensions on benefit receipt in cases of domestic violence, disability, or good faith unemployment.^{xviii}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

Kentucky offers parenting programs and support groups to incarcerated and noncustodial fathers.^{xix}



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Job Training and Employment Services

Fathers in families receiving K-TAP benefits may be eligible to receive employment services through the Kentucky Works! program, including job-search services and referrals. Moreover, Kentucky's network of one-stop career centers offers educational services, skills training, employment assessments, career planning, funding for on-the-job training, job-search assistance, and service referrals.^{xx}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

Kentucky's correctional facilities offer a number of programs specifically for fathers. For example, Fathers and Children Together promotes positive father-child interactions by teaching anger management, problem solving, and discipline. The program also sponsors visitation sessions for fathers and their children.^{xxi} Another program, Even Start, which focuses on family literacy, offers parenting education, early childhood education, basic education, life-skills education, and parent-child activities directed at improving fathers' parenting skills and promoting incarcerated fathers' successful reentry into society.^{xxii} In addition, correctional facilities around the state offer family reunification programs; programs to help fathers prevent their children's substance use; and programs through which fathers and grandfathers can record audio books for their young children.^{xxiii}

Resources

- **Kentucky Division of Child Support.** This Web site provides an overview of Kentucky's child support program and services available for custodial parents; available at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcs/>

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