



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



## NRFC State Profiles: South Carolina 2010

### Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

#### *State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded funding to several responsible fatherhood programs in South Carolina. For example, the South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families will work to increase employment among low-income fathers; enhance life skills; offer training on anger management, communication skills, and substance abuse prevention; employ culturally-sensitive fathering and co-parenting strategies; and emphasize the benefits of marriage.<sup>i</sup>

#### *State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood*

Teenage parents who receive Family Independence (FI) benefits are encouraged to complete high school in order to delay subsequent pregnancies.<sup>ii</sup> In addition, the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Adolescent Pregnancy provides education, technical assistance, public awareness, advocacy, and research efforts directed at local organizations aimed at preventing adolescent pregnancy.<sup>iii</sup> Finally, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control offers family planning services to men and women throughout the state in an effort to prevent unintended pregnancy. The program runs 71 clinic sites in every county in the state, which offer services such as education and counseling, clinical services, contraceptive services, and instruction in abstinence.<sup>iv</sup>

#### *The Family and Medical Leave Act*

South Carolina is subject to the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), which requires employers with 50 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 an illness, or to care for an ill family member. The FMLA protects the jobs of parents who have worked with the same organization for at least one year and have worked at least 1,250 hours within the past year. In addition to the federal FMLA, South Carolina's Human Affairs Law extends job protection benefits to include private and public sector employees working for companies with at least 15 employees.<sup>v</sup>

#### *Domestic Violence Services*

The South Carolina Department of Social Services has created standards for domestic violence shelters in the state. Among other services, shelters should provide 24-hour crisis intervention and emergency housing for domestic violence victims. Shelters may also offer parenting and life skills education, case management, legal counsel, children's programming, and transitional housing.<sup>vi</sup> Additionally, the Domestic Violence Law of 2003 ordered the Department of Social Services to create standards for and approve batterers treatment programs designed to reduce and/or eliminate domestic violence.<sup>vii</sup>

The South Carolina Attorney General's office operates a number of programs, such as the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women program and the Pro Bono Program, which are designed to provide legal advocacy for victims, to increase awareness of domestic violence, and to provide training for law enforcement and others associated with the legal system. The Attorney General's office also holds an annual Silent Witness ceremony to raise awareness of domestic homicide.<sup>viii</sup>

*Take Time to Be a Dad Today*

### *Child Custody Policy*

South Carolina determines child custody based on the best interests of the child.<sup>ix</sup>

This may include, but is not limited to, factors such as the child's wishes; whether each parent's religious faith is the same as the child's; and evidence of domestic violence.

### *Paternity Establishment*

Establishing paternity for a child born outside of marriage provides the child with rights to Social Security benefits, life insurance benefits, veterans' benefits, and inheritance rights; provides the child with a sense of identity; allows for the establishment of child support orders; and helps secure health insurance for the child. In South Carolina, paternity can be established voluntarily by having both parents sign a paternity acknowledgement affidavit.<sup>x</sup> If paternity is contested, the mother and alleged father must participate in a court hearing and/or genetic testing in order to establish paternity.<sup>xi</sup>

### *Child Support Assistance*

The South Carolina Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED), part of the South Carolina Department of Social Services, provides services to any custodial parent who needs assistance in receiving child support payments and to any noncustodial parent who wants to establish paternity or have a support order reviewed. The CSED can help locate noncustodial parents; establish paternity; and establish, modify, and enforce child support orders.<sup>xii</sup> The CSED also administers the Visitation Involvement Parenting (VIP) pilot program, designed to improve parents' relationship and to increase noncustodial parents' child support payment through employment.<sup>xiii</sup>

### *Child Support Enforcement*

In cases of child support nonpayment, the South Carolina Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) may take a variety of actions against noncustodial parents. Among these are withholding income; intercepting federal and state income tax refunds; intercepting unemployment of workers' compensation benefits; placing a lien against the parent's property; denying, restricting, or revoking the parent's passport; suspending or revoking the parent's driver's, occupational, professional, business, or commercial license; holding a "rule to show cause" hearing; fining the parent for nonpayment; and sentencing the noncustodial parent to jail for up to one year.<sup>xiv</sup>

## Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

### *State-Funded Marriage Preparation Activities*

Currently, South Carolina does not use state funds for marriage preparation activities.

### *Other Marriage Initiatives*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau provides funding for a healthy marriage program, the Heritage Keeper's Healthy Marriage Initiative in Charleston, South Carolina. The program works primarily with low-income minority couples and offers marriage education in order to help couples develop relationship skills and to support stable families.<sup>xv</sup>

## Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

### *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Benefits*

The Family Independence (FI) program provides cash assistance to low-income families in the state of South Carolina. Families may receive benefits for up to 24 months in any 10-year period, with a 60-month lifetime limit on benefit receipt. Among other requirements for FI receipt, adults who apply for FI benefits must conduct an initial job search within the first two weeks of applying. Twenty-four months after they begin receiving benefits, participants must engage in at least 30 hours of work activities per week, of which 20 hours per week must be categorized as Core Components. Core Components include subsidized and unsubsidized employment; job readiness activities, such as job search assistance, basic skills education, and substance abuse treatment;

employment preparation; vocational education; work experience; and community service. Non-core activities, which can count for up to 10 hours per week of the work requirement, include job skills training; education related to employment, such as computer training; and enrollment in a GED or secondary school program. In two-parent families, the required number of hours of work per week is 35 hours if the family does not receive child care assistance and 55 hours if the family does receive child care assistance.<sup>xvi</sup>

#### *Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers*

The South Carolina Child Support Enforcement Division administers the Visitation Involvement Parenting (VIP) program to improve parents' relationships and increase noncustodial fathers' child support payment. The VIP program includes employment and training services for the noncustodial parent, mediation services for both parents, and information on working with the Family Court to enforce visitation orders. This program is currently available in four South Carolina counties.<sup>xvii</sup>

#### *Job Training and Employment Services*

As part of the Family Independence (FI) program, low-income individuals may be eligible to participate in the Employment Preparation Program (EPP). The EPP is a four-week program to enhance job readiness and life skills among FI recipients and includes vocational assessment, networking, interview skills, job skills, problem solving, and communication skills.<sup>xviii</sup> South Carolina also operates the Virtual One-Stop System, which provides online access to employment development tools and information for job seekers.<sup>xix</sup>

### Incarceration and Reentry

#### *Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers*

The South Carolina Department of Corrections does not offer any programs designed specifically for incarcerated fathers. However, some programs, such as the Young Offender Program and the Short Term Offender Program (STOP), include parenting components.<sup>xx</sup>

### Resources

- **South Carolina Department of Social Services, Family Independence Policy Manual.** This document provides detailed information about requirements for and benefits of South Carolina's Family Independence (FI) program; available at [http://www.state.sc.us/dss/fi/fi\\_manual.pdf](http://www.state.sc.us/dss/fi/fi_manual.pdf)

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