

"I was very proud I helped make the child, so it's my duty to be a good provider as well as a role model."



Preface and Acknowledgments

Connecting Low-Income Fathers and Children: A Guide to Practical Policies is designed to assist state policymakers in their consideration of policies related to low-income families. It is intended to provide simple and concrete information about the challenges facing low-income fathers and offers a range of feasible policy alternatives that directly confront these barriers. Because more mothers and children leave the welfare rolls due to employment, sanctions and time limits, it is vital that these families have access to the emotional and financial contributions that fathers can make. The policies discussed here are designed to highlight ways that states can help to guarantee this goal by ensuring children benefit from two involved parents—even if parents are unmarried.

This guide was developed under the leadership of the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) Advisory Committee on Responsible Fatherhood. The committee is part of the Nurturing Responsible Families Project under the direction of Dana Reichert at NCSL. To complete this project, the advisory committee undertook numerous hours of constructive dialogue and debate, conducted interviews with low-income fathers, visited fatherhood sites and embraced the expertise of their colleagues to work through the complicated and often contentious issues surrounding low-income fathers and their families. The committee provided a basic framework for ideas and concepts that allowed NCSL staff to compile a written product that is intended to serve the needs of policymakers—particularly state legislators.

The committee is comprised of state legislators, state agency officials, program practitioners, advocates and research experts who represent diverse regional, political and cultural backgrounds. Members of the committee include co-chairs Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter of South Carolina and Representative Ken Svedjan of North Dakota; Representative Mark Anderson of Arizona; Representative Evelyn Lynn of Florida; Representative John Martinez of Connecticut; Senator Elaine Syzmoniak of Iowa; Representative Rod Wright of California; Pauline Burton, child support director in Colorado; Pat Wilson-Coker, commissioner of Social Services in Connecticut; Jerry Hamilton of Children Up Front; Joe Jones of the Center on Fathers, Families and Workforce Development; Geraldo Rodriguez of the Parents' Fair Share Programs; Peter Spokes of the National Center on Fathering; Vicki Turestsky of the Center on Law and Social Policy; Daniel Ash of Partners for Fragile Families; Dianna Durham-

McCloud of the National Center for Strategic Non-Profit Planning and Community Leadership; and Dana Reichert and Sheri Steisel of the NCSL staff.

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Members of the NCSL Advisory Committee on Responsible Fatherhood (some members not pictured). Top row, L to R: Dana Reichert, Daniel Ash, Geraldo Rodriguez, Representative John Martinez and Ron Mincy. Bottom row, L to R: Co-chair Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Dianna Durham-McCloud and Assemblyman Rod Wright.

Program Contacts

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Advisory committee members listen to fathers. L to R: Sheri Steisel, Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter, Dianna Durham-McLoud, Geraldo Rodriguez and co-chair Representative Ken Svedjan.

Glossary

Arrearages—Amount of back child support owed by father to either the state for welfare benefits paid to a mother and child, or to the mother directly.

Brown Amendment—Section 901 of the federal welfare reform law that gives state legislatures appropriation authority over TANF and 15 percent of Welfare-to-Work funds.

Compromising Arrearages—The state's ability to forgive a portion of a state debt owed by an obligor for past due child support for amounts of welfare payments paid to a mother.

Deadbeat Dads—Fathers who can support their children but choose not to.

Deadbroke Dads—Fathers who would provide for their children but cannot, either because they are unemployed or do not make enough to support themselves and their children.

Default Order—An automatic order if a father fails to appear for court. Child support amount based on presumed income.

Downward Modification—A reduction in the amount of a child support order based on the financial circumstances of the parent. Can be used when a parent's employment or income changes enough to make it unfeasible to pay the current order of support, or when an initial order has been set too high.

Enhanced Child Support Enforcement—Focusing attention on cases that typically have been low priority and developing an appropriate course of action using a combination of nontraditional methods like downward modification, referral to employment services and parenting skills. These services usually involve partnerships with other entities—such as the court system and community-based organizations—that deliver specific services.

Federal Share—The portion of money that a state must pay back to the federal government for every dollar of collected

child support in exchange for receiving federal funds to operate child support enforcement programs.

Fragile Family—Low-income, never-married parents and their children.

Front-Line Workers—Child support or welfare agency employees who handle direct client services or case management functions.

Hard Skills—Job skill training focused on a specific skill like typing, computer training, welding, etc.

Imputed Income—Level of income determined by the court based on earning capacity, willingness to seek employment or other factors that may be different than the presented evidence of earnings.

IV-D Agency—The agency responsible for administering the child support program in a state. Called IV-D because Title IV-D of the Social Security Act of 1975 required states to create a child support division.

Mandatory Minimum Amount—A child support award set at a minimum amount (between \$20 and \$50) that cannot be lowered by a court.

Minimum Presumptive Amount—Child support award set at a minimum amount (usually \$50) that can be lowered based on presented evidence.

MOE/Maintenance of Effort—The amount of state money a state must spend each year to qualify for the federal TANF block grant.

Obligee—Person who is to receive child support.

Obligor— Person responsible for paying the child support.

Pass-Through—State option to give collected child support to families who receive welfare, foregoing reimbursement itself for cash expenditures. Looked upon as an incentive to increase father payment of child support and mother cooperation with support enforcement efforts.

Peer Support—A type of service that provides fathers an opportunity to learn about their rights and responsibilities as fathers, discuss problems and issues with other fathers, and develop an increased sense of esteem in their roles as fathers, men and partners through regular meetings with other fathers.

Soft Skills—Job skill training focused on attitudinal changes such as appropriate work attire, conflict management, work ethic or getting along with co-workers.

TANF—Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Allows states considerable flexibility in providing services for poor families. Allows states to determine eligibility, including eligibility for fathers who are not married and who may not live with the mother of their child.

Team Parenting Plan—A plan developed between a mother and father outlining ways they will jointly take responsibility for raising their child. Helps unmarried couples discuss these issues in the absence of a court-ordered arrangement.

Underground Dads—Dads who provide support to their families without disclosing such support through formal systems.

Underground Support—Informal or in-kind support that a father may provide to his family in lieu of paying directly through the court system.

Unliquidated Obligation—The amount of unspent federal TANF funds available to a state that the state intends to spend based on existing contracts or agreements specifying expenditures.

Unobligated Balance—The amount of unspent federal TANF funds available to a state for which no agreement or intent to spend has been set forth. Also referred to as “rainy day” or reserve funds.

Welfare-to-Work—A grant to states created in the 1997 Budget Reconciliation Act for investing in services targeted toward the hard to serve welfare population or low-income fathers whose children have received TANF.

Wrap-Around Services—Smooth transition between one agency to another, minimizing the need for multiple access points for different services.



NCSL advisory committee members, Parents' Fair Share staff and participants.

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Fatherhood Internet Resources

Broke But Not Deadbeat
<http://www.calib.com/peerta/pdf/BROKENOTDEADBEAT.PDF>

The Center on Fathers, Families and Public Policy
<http://www.cffpp.org/>

Center for Law and Social Policy
http://www.clasp.org/pubs/childrenforce/child_support_enforcement.htm

The Fatherhood Project, Families and Work Institute
<http://www.fatherhoodproject.org/>

Florida Commission on Responsible Fatherhood
<http://www.fcorf.org/>

Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Studies
<http://opr.princeton.edu/crcw/ff/>

The Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization
<http://www.responsiblefatherhood.org/>

National Center on Fathers, Families and Public Policy
<http://www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/>

National Center on Fathering
<http://www.fathers.com/>

The National Fatherhood Initiative
<http://www.fatherhood.org>

National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families
<http://www.fatherhoodproject.org/npnpage.htm>

U.S Office of Child Support Enforcement Fathers Page
www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/rpt/fth/fth_m.htm

Welfare Information Network: Fatherhood and Family Formation
<http://www.welfareinfo.org/fatherho.htm>

Incarcerated Fathers Resources

Brenner, Eric. *Fathers in Prison: A Review of the Data*. University of Pennsylvania: National Center on Fathers and Families, 1998.

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Child Welfare League of America
www.cwla.org/cwla/prison

ChIPs—Children of Incarcerated Parents
www.dreamscape.com/ccacny/chips.htm

The Corrections Connection
www.corrections.com

Family and Corrections Network
www.fcnetwork.org

FamilyWorks
www.osborne.org/family.html

Parents and Children Together, Inc. (P.A.C.T.)
www.fcnetwork.org/programs/pact.html

Project Return (Tulane University of Public Health and Tropical Medicine)
www.projectreturn.com/

Project SEEK (Services to Enable and Empower Kids)
www.fcnetwork.org/reading/mott.html

U.S. Department of Justice—Bureau of Justice Statistics
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/

Vera Institute of Justice
www.vera.org

Pregnancy Prevention Resources

The Alan Guttmacher Institute. *Contraception Counts: State-By-State Information*. New York, N.Y.: The Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1997.

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Urban Institute. *Involving Males in Preventing Teen Pregnancy: A Guide for Program Planners*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1998.

Pregnancy Prevention Internet Resources

Alan Guttmacher Institute
<http://www.agi-usa.org/>

Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count
<http://www.aecf.org/kidscount/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Adolescent and School Health
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/>

Child Trends
<http://www.childtrends.org>

Institute for Youth Development
<http://www.youthdevelopment.org/>

Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation
<http://www.kff.org/>

National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
<http://www.teenpregnancy.org/>

National Center for Health Statistics
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>

National Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Parenting and Prevention
<http://www.noapp.org/>

Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Program
<http://www.hhs.gov/progorg/opa/titlexx/oapp.html>

Urban Institute
<http://www.urban.org/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Strategy to Prevent Teen Pregnancy
<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/teenp/teenpreg99.htm>

Welfare Information Network
<http://www.welfareinfo.org/teen.htm>