



Fatherhood Initiatives: Connecting Fathers to Their Children

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Summary

In 2010, 24% of families with children (under age 18) were maintained by mothers. According to some estimates, 60% of children born during the 1990s will spend a significant portion of their childhood in a home without their father. Research indicates that children raised in single-parent families are more likely than children raised in two-parent families (with both biological parents) to do poorly in school, have emotional and behavioral problems, become teenage parents, and have poverty-level incomes. In hopes of improving the long-term outlook for children in single-parent families, federal, state, and local governments, along with public and private organizations, are supporting programs and activities that promote the financial and personal responsibility of noncustodial fathers to their children and increase the participation of fathers in the lives of their children. These programs have come to be known as “responsible fatherhood” programs.

Sources of federal funding for fatherhood programs include the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, TANF state Maintenance-of-Effort (MOE) funding, welfare-to-work funds, Child Support Enforcement (CSE) funds, and Social Services Block Grant (Title XX) funds.

Beginning with the 106th Congress, the House, but not the Senate, passed bills containing specific funding for responsible fatherhood initiatives (in the 107th and 108th Congresses as part of welfare reauthorization bills). Moreover, from the start, President George W. Bush was a supporter of responsible fatherhood programs; each of his budgets included funding for such programs. In the 109th Congress, P.L. 109-171 (the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005) was enacted. It included a provision that provides up to \$50 million per year (FY2006-FY2010) in competitive grants to states, territories, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and public and nonprofit community groups (including religious organizations) for responsible fatherhood initiatives. In the 110th Congress, bills were introduced but not passed that would have, among other things, increased federal funding of responsible fatherhood programs. There were several responsible fatherhood bills introduced during the 111th Congress. In addition, the Obama Administration’s FY2011 budget included a proposal to substantially increase funding for responsible fatherhood programs under a proposed new Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund. Under the proposal, the new fund would have received \$500 million for FY2011 (this proposal was not passed by either the House or the Senate). Instead, P.L. 111-291 (enacted December 8, 2010) extended funding for the Title IV-A Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants for an additional year (i.e., through FY2011). For FY2011, it appropriated \$75 million for awarding funds for healthy marriage promotion activities and \$75 million for awarding funds for activities promoting responsible fatherhood.

Most fatherhood programs include media campaigns that emphasize the importance of emotional, physical, psychological, and financial connections of fathers to their children. Most fatherhood programs include parenting education; responsible decision-making; mediation services for both parents; providing an understanding of the CSE program; conflict resolution, coping with stress, and problem-solving skills; peer support; and job-training opportunities (skills development, interviewing skills, job search, job-retention skills, job-advancement skills, etc.).

The federal government’s support of fatherhood initiatives raises a wide array of issues. This report briefly examines the role of the CSE agency in fatherhood programs and discusses initiatives to promote and support father-child interaction outside the framework of the father-mother relationship.

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Introduction

In 2010, almost 30% of the 35.2 million families with children (under age 18) were maintained by one parent;¹ this figure is up from 10% in 1970. Most of the children in these single-parent families were being raised by their mothers; in 2010, 79% of single-parent families were mother-only families and 21% were father-only families. According to some estimates, 60% of children born during the 1990s will spend a significant portion of their childhood in a home without their biological father. Research indicates that children raised in single-parent families are more likely than children raised in two-parent families (with both biological parents) to do poorly in school, have emotional and behavioral problems, become teenage parents, and have poverty-level incomes as adults.² Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that most of these mothers, despite the added stress of being a single parent, do a good job raising their children. That is, although children with absent fathers are at greater risk of having the aforementioned problems, most do not experience them. In hopes of improving the long-term outlook for children in single-parent families, federal, state, and local governments, along with public and private organizations, are supporting programs and activities that promote the financial and personal responsibility of noncustodial fathers to their children and reduce the incidence of father absence in the lives of children.

The third finding of the 1996 welfare reform law (P.L. 104-193) states: “Promotion of responsible fatherhood and motherhood is integral to successful child rearing and the well-being of children.” Moreover, three of the four goals of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are consistent with the components of most fatherhood programs. The three fatherhood-related goals are ending welfare dependence by employment and marriage, reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and encouraging the formation and maintenance of two-parent families. Thus, states may spend TANF and TANF state Maintenance-of-Effort (MOE) funds on fatherhood programs. Further, any services that are directed toward the goal of reducing nonmarital births or the goal of encouraging two-parent families are free of income eligibility rules.

With the exception of the federal Child Support Enforcement (CSE) program, fathers historically have been ignored with regard to their input or participation in welfare programs. Moreover, it was not until 1996 that Congress broadened its view to acknowledge the non-economic contributions that fathers make to their children by authorizing the use of CSE funds to promote access and visitation programs. With the enactment of the 1996 welfare reform law, which helped reduce the welfare rolls, increase the employment of low-income mothers, and strengthen the CSE program, Congress began focusing its attention on the emotional well-being of children. Historically, Congress had treated visitation and child support as legally separate issues, with only child support enforcement activities under the purview of the federal government. The 1996 law

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Family and Living Arrangements, Table FM-1: Families, by Presence of Own Children Under 18: 1950-2008. Internet release date: November 2010. See <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hh-fam.html>.

² Sara McLanahan and Gary Sandefur, *Growing Up With a Single Parent: What Hurts, What Helps* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), see also L. Bumpass, “Children and Marital Disruption: A Replication and Update,” *Demography*, vol. 21 (1984), pp. 71-82; Rebecca A. Maynard, ed., *Kids Having Kids: A Robin Hood Foundation Special Report on the Costs of Adolescent Childbearing* (New York, 1996).

authorized an annual \$10 million entitlement of CSE funds to states to establish and operate access and visitation programs.³

It appears that a consensus has occurred regarding the need to connect or reconnect noncustodial parents to their children. During the 106th Congress, Representative Nancy Johnson, then chair of the Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources, stated, “To take the next step in welfare reform we must find a way to help children by providing them with more than a working mother and sporadic child support.” She noted that many low-income fathers have problems similar to those of mothers on welfare—namely, they are likely to have dropped out of high school, to have little work experience, and to have significant barriers that lessen their ability to find and/or keep a job. She also asserted that in many cases these men are “dead broke” rather than “dead beats,” and that the federal government should help these noncustodial fathers meet both their financial and emotional obligations to their children.⁴

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Source: Executive Office of the President, *A Blueprint for New Beginnings—A Responsible Budget for America’s Priorities* (February 2001), chap. 12, p. 75. (Administration of President George W. Bush)

During the 106th, 107th, and 108th Congresses, legislation was passed by the House, but not by the Senate, that would have established categorical competitive grants to community and faith-based organizations for responsible fatherhood programs. Moreover, each of President Bush’s budgets included grant programs for responsible fatherhood programs to help reconnect noncustodial parents to their children by providing job-related services to them and by improving their parenting and social interaction skills. During the period from 2002-2004, the responsible fatherhood bills that were passed by the House were part of welfare reauthorization legislation. The 109th Congress introduced several welfare reauthorization bills that included funding for responsible fatherhood grant programs. P.L. 109-171—the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (S. 1932/H.Rept. 109-362)—which was enacted on February 8, 2006, included a provision (in Title IV-A of the Social Security Act) that provided up to \$50 million per year (FY2006-FY2010) for competitive responsible fatherhood grants. (For a more detailed legislative history of fatherhood initiatives, see the discussion of “Legislative

³ The child access and visitation program (Section 391 of P.L. 104-193) funded the following activities in FY2008: mediation, counseling, parental education, development of parenting plans, visitation enforcement, monitored visitation, neutral drop-off and pickup, supervised visitation, and development of guidelines for visitation and custody. In FY2008, about 85,000 individuals received services. The most common services were parent education, mediation, parenting plans, and supervised visitation. Most states used a mix of services. Most of the service providers were Human Services Agencies. Individuals were referred to services by the courts, CSE or welfare agencies, and others, as well as by self-referral. Services were both mandatory and voluntary, as determined by the state. Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, *Child Access and Visitation Grants: State/Jurisdiction Profiles for FY2008* (Washington DC, March 8, 2010).

⁴ U.S. Congress, House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources, “Hearing on Fatherhood Legislation,” Statement of Chairman Nancy Johnson, 106th Congress, 1st Session (October 5, 1999), p. 4.

Action” later in this report.⁵) Although bills were introduced in the 110th Congress to increase funding for responsible fatherhood programs, they were not acted on by either the House or the Senate. There were several bills introduced during the 111th Congress that would have increased funding and made other changes to responsible fatherhood programs. P.L. 111-291 (enacted December 8, 2010) extended funding for Title IV-A responsible fatherhood grants through FY2011. For FY2011, it appropriated \$75 million for awarding funds for activities promoting responsible fatherhood.

What Are Fatherhood Initiatives?

The realization that one parent, especially a low-income parent, often cannot meet the financial needs of her or his children is not new. In 1975, Congress viewed the CSE program as a way to make noncustodial parents responsible for the financial support of their children. In more recent years, Congress has viewed the CSE program as the link that could enable single parents who are low-wage earners to become self-supporting. With the advent of welfare reform in 1996, Congress agreed that many noncustodial parents were in the same financial straits as the mothers of their children who were receiving cash welfare. Thus, the 1996 welfare reform law (P.L. 104-193) requires states to have laws under which the state has the authority to issue an order or request that a court or administrative process issue an order that requires noncustodial parents who were unable to pay their child support obligation for a child receiving TANF benefits to participate in TANF work activities. As noted earlier, the 1996 law also provided funding for states to develop programs that supported the noncustodial parent’s right and responsibility to visit and interact with his or her children.

To help fathers and mothers meet their parental responsibilities, many policy analysts and observers support broad-based collaborative strategies that go beyond welfare and child support agencies and include schools, work programs, prison systems, churches, community organizations, and the health care system.

Although Congress only recently authorized federal funding specifically designated for responsible fatherhood programs, many states and localities, private organizations, and nonprofit agencies have been operating fatherhood programs for several years.⁶ Most fatherhood programs include media campaigns that emphasize the importance of emotional, physical, psychological, and financial connections of fathers to their children. To counterbalance some of the procedural, psychological, emotional, and physical barriers to paternal involvement, most fatherhood programs include many of the following components:

- parenting education—a course that describes the responsibilities of parents to their children; it discusses the need for affection, gentle guidance, and financial support; the need to be a proud example and respectful of the child’s mother; and the need to recognize developmentally appropriate behavior for children of different ages and respond appropriately to children’s developmental needs;

⁵ For a detailed history of the responsible fatherhood policy arena, see Kathleen Sylvester and Kathleen Reich, “Making Fathers Count: Assessing the Progress of Responsible Fatherhood Efforts,” Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002.

⁶ National Governors Association, *Promoting Responsible Fatherhood: An Update* (Washington, DC, August 3, 1998).

- responsible decision-making (with regard to sexuality, establishment of paternity, and financial support);
- mentoring relationships with successful fathers and successful couples;
- mediation services (communicating with the other parent, supervised visitation, discipline of children, etc.);
- providing an understanding of the CSE program;
- conflict resolution, coping with stress, problem-solving skills;
- developing values in children, appropriate discipline, participation in child-rearing;
- understanding male-female relationships;
- peer support;
- practical tasks to stimulate involvement—discussing ways to increase parent-child interactions such as fixing dinner for children, taking children to the park, playing a game, helping children with schoolwork, listening to children’s concerns, setting firm limits on behavior; and
- job training opportunities (skills development, interviewing skills, job search, job retention skills, job advancement skills, etc.).

Although most people refer to programs that seek to help fathers initiate or maintain contact with their children and become emotionally involved in their lives as “fatherhood” programs, the programs generally are gender-neutral. Their underlying goal is participation of the noncustodial parent in the lives of his or her children.

Funding

For FY2001, Congress appropriated \$3 million for a nongovernmental national fatherhood organization named the National Fatherhood Initiative (P.L. 106-553), as well as an additional \$500,000 for the National Fatherhood Initiative and \$500,000 for another non-governmental organization called the Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Revitalization (P.L. 106-554). However, the House and Senate failed to reach agreement in the 106th Congress on H.R. 4678, a bill that included funding for a nationwide fatherhood grants program (\$140 million over four years). Similarly, during the 107th and 108th Congresses, the House and the Senate did not reach agreement on legislation that included a responsible fatherhood grant program.

Nevertheless, several sources of federal funding for fatherhood programs already existed and continue to exist. They include the TANF program, TANF state MOE funding, welfare-to-work funds, CSE funds, and Social Services Block Grant (Title XX) funds.⁷ According to HHS, about half of all states use TANF funds for responsible fatherhood programs.⁸ In addition, many private foundations are providing financial support for fatherhood programs.

⁷ “Funding Sources for Fatherhood Programs,” *Welfare Information Network*, vol. 5, no. 2 (January 2001).

⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *HHS Fact Sheet: Promoting Responsible Fatherhood* (Washington, DC, April 26, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, states can use TANF block grant funds and state MOE funds on programs or services that accomplish the broad purposes of the TANF program. These sources of funding are potentially the largest sources of funding for fatherhood initiatives.⁹ Pursuant to P.L. 109-171, the TANF block grant program to states was reauthorized through FY2010 at a funding level of \$16.5 billion annually. In addition, the state funding or MOE requirement (at the 75% level) is about \$10.4 billion.¹⁰

The cash welfare caseload declined from a peak of 5.1 million Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) families in 1994 to 1.7 million TANF families in 2008. The 67% reduction in the cash welfare caseload, together with the fixed block grant funding, means funds that otherwise would have been spent for cash assistance are now available for other purposes. These other purposes could include fatherhood initiatives, which are allowable uses of TANF and state MOE funds. Moreover, fatherhood initiatives are not subject to the requirements that apply to spending for ongoing cash assistance such as work requirements and time limits.¹¹

P.L. 109-171, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, was enacted on February 8, 2006. It included a provision that provides up to \$50 million per year (for each of FY2006-FY2010) for competitive responsible fatherhood grants to states, territories, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and public and nonprofit community organizations, including religious organizations, for responsible fatherhood initiatives.

According to data from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), 99 grantees were awarded five-year contracts to implement responsible fatherhood programs. In FY2009, the responsible fatherhood grants/contracts (in aggregate) amounted to about \$45 million.¹²

P.L. 111-291, the Claims Resolution Act of 2010 (enacted December 8, 2010), extended funding for the Title IV-A Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants through FY2011. For FY2011, it appropriated \$75 million for awarding funds for healthy marriage promotion activities and \$75 million for awarding funds for activities promoting responsible fatherhood. The result is that the Title IV-A Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants (which were funded at \$150 million annually¹³ from FY2006 through FY2010) are now to be funded for an additional year on an equal basis.

⁹ In addition to long-term welfare recipients, the \$2.7 billion in welfare-to-work funds appropriated for FY1998 and FY1999 could have been used to provide services for certain noncustodial parents who were unemployed, underemployed, or having difficulty making their child support payments. States and localities were allowed to continue to spend their welfare-to-work funds through FY2004.

¹⁰ The TANF block grant program also has a MOE requirement that states continue to spend at least 75% (80% if they fail to meet TANF work requirements) of what they spent under prior law cash welfare-related programs in FY1994 on families that meet TANF eligibility requirements.

¹¹ Dana Reichert, *Broke but Not Deadbeat: Reconnecting Low-Income Fathers and Children* (Washington, DC, National Conference of State Legislatures, July 1999).

¹² Information on the responsible fatherhood grants in each of the 10 HHS regions is available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/hmabstracts/index.htm>. See also http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/olab/budget/2010/sec3i_tanf_2010cj.pdf.

¹³ As mentioned earlier, the healthy marriage grants were funded at about \$100 million annually and the responsible fatherhood grant were funded at \$50 million annually.

Research and Evaluation

Research findings indicate that father absence affects outcomes for children in terms of schooling, emotional and behavioral maturity, labor force participation, and nonmarital childbearing. These findings hold when income is taken into account, so the negative effects of father absence are not limited to those created by reduced family income.¹⁴

Both advocates and critics of the CSE program agree that parents should be responsible for the economic and emotional well-being of their children. They agree that many low-income noncustodial parents are unable to meet their financial responsibility to their children and are barely able, or unable, to support themselves. They also agree that some noncustodial parents do not know how to be responsible parents because they were not taught that knowledge or were not exposed to enough positive role models that they could emulate. Below are several examples of demonstration programs that seek to, or sought to, help low-income men become responsible fathers by helping them to gain employment or job mobility and by teaching them life skills so that they might reconnect with their children in a positive sustained manner.

MDRC Parents' Fair Share Demonstration Project

The Parents' Fair Share (PFS) Demonstration was a national demonstration project that combined job training and placement, peer support groups, and other services with the goal of increasing the earnings and child support payments of unemployed noncustodial parents (generally fathers) of children on welfare, improving their parenting and communication skills, and providing an opportunity for them to participate more fully and effectively in the lives of their children.¹⁵

Between 1994 and 1996, over 5,000 noncustodial parents who were eligible to participate in the seven-site PFS demonstration were randomly assigned to either a program (experiment) group that would receive PFS services or a control group that would not receive PFS services. The interim report on the PFS demonstration, which was designed by MDRC and conducted and funded by public and private organizations, found that parents who received PFS services were more likely to pay child support through the CSE system than those who remained in the control group. In all seven sites, the proportion of parents who paid child support during the 18-month follow-up period increased significantly; but the amount of child support paid over the 18 months increased by a statistically significant amount in only two of the seven sites.

The final report on the PFS demonstration concluded that the program did not significantly increase employment or earnings among the full sample of PFS participants during the two years after they entered the program. However, the program did increase earnings among a subgroup of men who were characterized as "less employable" (i.e., those without a high school diploma and with little recent work experience).¹⁶ In addition, another of the final reports found that although

¹⁴ *Meeting the Challenge: What the Federal Government Can Do to Support Responsible Fatherhood Efforts—A Report to the President* [...] (Washington, DC, January 2001), <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/guidance01>.

¹⁵ The Parents' Fair Share (PFS) demonstration was funded by a consortium of private foundations (the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Ford Foundation, the AT&T Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, and the Northwest Area Foundation) and federal agencies (the U.S. Department of Human Services and the U.S. Department of Labor). The PFS demonstration was conducted in seven cities: Dayton, OH; Grand Rapids, MI; Jacksonville, FL; Los Angeles, CA; Memphis, TN; Springfield, MA; and Trenton, NJ.

¹⁶ John M. Martinez and Cynthia Miller, *Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income* (continued...)

PFS did not affect the frequency of fathers' visits with their children, it did increase the level of disagreement between parents about child-rearing. According to the researchers, this finding might suggest that some noncustodial parents were becoming more involved in new areas of decision-making about the child, which the researchers viewed as a positive development. The report noted that the increased level of disagreements between the parents was not accompanied by an increased level of aggressive forms of conflict or domestic violence, which researchers surmise might indicate that the parents were able to distinguish between legitimate parental differences of opinion versus latent animosity in their male-female relationship.¹⁷

One of the reports noted the following as lessons learned from the PFS demonstration:

Low-income noncustodial fathers are a disadvantaged group. Many live on the edge of poverty and face severe barriers to finding jobs, while those who can find work typically hold low-wage or temporary jobs. Despite their low, irregular income, many of these fathers are quite involved in their children's lives and, when they can, provide financial and other kinds of support.... Some services, such as peer support proved to be very important and valuable to the men and became the focal point of the program. Other services, such as skill-building, were hard to implement because the providers had little experience working with such a disadvantaged group; it was difficult to find employers willing to hire the men, and the providers were not equipped to deal with the circumstances of men who often were simply trying to make it from one day to the next. Finally, we learned about the challenges of implementing a program like PFS, which involves the partnership of various agencies with different goals, and about the difficulty of recruiting low-income fathers into such a program.¹⁸

Some of the recommendations for future programs included structuring the program to encourage longer-term participation and to include job retention services; providing fathers who cannot find private sector employment with community service jobs; earmarking adequate funding for employment services, involving custodial mothers in the program, and providing fathers with legal services to help them gain visitation rights; and encouraging partnerships between CSE agencies and fatherhood programs.¹⁹

Some researchers of the PFS approach contend that a broader array of intensive employment services, such as skills training combined with part-time work and community service employment for persons who were unable to get job, might have improved the outcomes of the program. Other analysts maintain that most of the fathers who participated in the PFS demonstration were estranged from their children when they entered the program and that some of them participated in lieu of serving time in jail. They assert that new unwed fathers are generally very attached to their children around the time of the child's birth and probably are more motivated than fathers of older children to take advantage of the opportunities and/or services offered by fatherhood programs.²⁰

(...continued)

Fathers' Employment (New York: MDRC, October 2000).

¹⁷ Virginia Knox and Cindy Redcross, *Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement* (New York: MDRC, October 2000).

¹⁸ Cynthia Miller and Virginia Knox, *The Challenge of Helping Low-Income Fathers Support Their Children: Final Lessons from Parents' Fair Share* (New York: MDRC, November 2001), pp. v-vi.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. v.

²⁰ Sara McLanahan, *Testimony before the Mayor's Task Force on Fatherhood Promotion*, National Fatherhood (continued...)

Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study

A “fragile” family consists of low-income children born outside of marriage whose two natural parents are working together to raise them—either by living together or through frequent visitation. According to the 1997 National Survey of America’s Families (NSAF), 25% of poor children under the age of two who were born outside of marriage lived with both of their biological parents; another 35% lived with their mother and saw their father at least every week.²¹

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is following a group of 4,700 children who were born in 20 large U.S. cities.²² The total sample size is 4,700 families, including 3,600 unmarried couples and 1,100 married couples. The data were intended to be representative of nonmarital births in each of the 20 cities and also representative of all nonmarital births in U.S. cities with populations over 200,000. Both parents were interviewed at the child’s birth and again when the child was age one, two, and five. In addition, in-home assessments of the children and their home environments were performed when the children were ages three and five. The parent interviews provided information on attitudes, relationships, parenting behavior, demographic characteristics, health (mental and physical), economic and employment status, neighborhood characteristics, and public welfare program participation. The in-home interview collected information on children’s cognitive and emotional development, health, and home environment. The study was expected to provide previously unavailable information on questions such as the following:

- What are the conditions and capabilities of new unwed parents, especially fathers? How many of these men hold steady jobs? How many want to be involved in raising their children?
- What is the nature of the relationship between unwed parents? How many couples are involved in stable, long-term relationships? How many expect to marry? How many experience high levels of conflict or domestic violence?
- What factors push new unwed parents together? What factors pull them apart? How do public policies affect parents’ behaviors and living arrangements?
- What are the long-term consequences for parents, children, and society of new welfare regulations, stronger paternity establishment, and stricter child support enforcement? What roles do child care and health care policies play? How do these policies play out in different labor market environments?²³

Initial analysis of the baseline data collected in 16 of the 20 cities from April 1998 through August 2000 indicated that 51% of unmarried parents live together (i.e., are cohabiting), and another 31% are romantically involved with each other. Further, 74% of the participant mothers said that they expect to marry the baby’s father. The data also indicated that 30% of fathers had

(...continued)

Summit, Washington, DC, June 14, 1999.

²¹ Elaine Sorensen, Ronald Mincy, and Ariel Halpern, *Redirecting Welfare Policy Toward Building Strong Families* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, March 2000).

²² The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study is a joint effort by Princeton University’s Center for Research on Child Wellbeing (CRCW) and Center for Health and Wellbeing, and Columbia University’s Social Indicators Survey Center and National Center for Children and Families (NCCF).

²³ Irwin Garfinkel and Sara McLanahan, “Fragile Families and Child Well-Being: A Survey of New Parents,” *Focus* (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty), vol. 21, no. 1 (spring 2000), pp. 9-11.

earnings of less than \$10,500 per year, and 62% of mothers had earnings of less than \$10,000 per year; about 43% of the mothers and 38% of the fathers lacked a high school degree. Although the data indicated that 85% of mothers and 98% of fathers worked at some point during the past year, 20% of fathers said that they were out of work during the week before the interview. The initial analysis also showed that 39% of the mothers drank alcohol, used drugs, or smoked during their pregnancies.²⁴

A 2007 report that examined data pertaining to the surveyed children at age five found that 16% of participant mothers were married to the father at the time of the five-year interview. Despite not marrying, about 40% of the parents were still romantically involved at the five-year interview. In cases where the couple were no longer romantically involved, 43% of the fathers had seen their children in the month previous to the interview. According to the report:

Fatherhood programs, such as education, training, support services, and content addressing issues of shared parenting, may also be appropriate for many new unmarried fathers. Engaging parents in responsible fatherhood programs (and weaving these programs into marriage promotion curriculums) early in their child's life may also help new fathers develop important parenting skills crucial to their child's healthy development. These programs may help fathers establish and maintain positive connections with their child and encourage their active participation in raising their child.²⁵

The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing in Middle Childhood Study received a \$17 million grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) of the Department of Health and Human Services to field a nine-year follow-up. The purpose of this project is to combine the core telephone surveys, in-home study, and teacher surveys into one larger project. Data collection began in 2007 and will continue through 2009.²⁶

Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) Responsible Fatherhood Programs

The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) provided \$2.0 million to fund Responsible Fatherhood demonstrations under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act. The programs operated in eight states between September 1997 and December 2002. The following eight states received Section 1115 grants or waivers from OCSE/Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to implement and test responsible fatherhood programs: California, Colorado, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Washington, and Wisconsin. These projects attempted to improve the employment and earnings of underemployed and unemployed noncustodial parents, and to motivate them to become more financially and emotionally involved in the lives of their children. Although the projects shared common goals, they varied with respect to service components and service delivery. OCSE also provided about \$500,000 for an

²⁴ Sara McLanahan, Irwin Garfinkel, Nancy E. Reichman, Julien Teitler, Marcia Carlson, and Christina Norland Audigier, *The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study: Baseline Report* (Princeton: Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, August 2001; rev. March 2003), at <http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/>.

²⁵ *Fragile Families Research Brief*, June 2007, Number 39. Parents' Relationship Status Five Years After a Non-Marital Birth. Princeton University and Columbia University.

²⁶ For more information on the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study, see <http://www.fragilefamilies.princeton.edu/about.asp>.

evaluation of the demonstration projects. A report on the implementation of the programs (from initial start-up in late 1997 through December 1999) noted the following:

The success of the Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects appears to be tied to the commitment of the staff. Reaching alienated and disenfranchised populations and convincing them to change their attitudes and behaviors is hard work. It takes time, persistence, repeated contacts, fast action, patience, firmness, and endless resourcefulness. Programs need to recruit key program staff who are inspired and inspiring. They also need to be knowledgeable about community services in order to maximize opportunities for participants. First-hand knowledge is key. The best referrals are not made out of directories, but result from long-standing familiarity with community services, eligibility requirements, available resources, and relevant personnel. Dedicated, knowledgeable, and energetic staff can better counsel and steer parents into a course of action that makes them more financially and emotionally responsible for their children.²⁷

A second, outcome report on the programs found that (1) low-income noncustodial fathers are a difficult population to recruit and serve; (2) many of the participants found jobs with the programs' help, but they were low-paying jobs and relatively few of the participants were able to increase earnings enough to meet their financial needs and those of their children; (3) child access problems were hard to define and resolve, and mediation should be used more extensively; (4) child support guidelines result in orders for low-income noncustodial parents that are unrealistically high; (5) CSE agencies should collaborate with fatherhood programs and pursue routine enforcement activities, as well as adopt policies and incentives that are responsive to low-income fathers; and (6) criminal history was the norm rather than the exception among the program participants, many participants faced ongoing alcohol and substance abuse problems, many did not have reliable transportation, and many lacked a court-ordered visitation arrangement.²⁸

The outcome report also found that employment rates and earnings increased significantly, especially for noncustodial parents who were previously unemployed. In addition, child support compliance rates increased significantly, especially for those who had not been paying previously. Moreover, the report found that 27% of the fathers reported seeing their children more often after completion of the program.

Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration

HHS has an ongoing partnership with the private-sector initiative called Partners for Fragile Families (PFF). The Partners for Fragile Families Project is an initiative of the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL), a nonprofit organization based in Washington, DC. The PFF was designed to help poor single fathers pull themselves out of poverty and build stronger links to their children and their children's mothers. The PFF was established in 1996 to provide support for these "fragile families," which are defined as low-

²⁷ Jessica Pearson and Nancy Thoennes, with David Price and Jane Venohr, *OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Programs: Early Implementation Lessons* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Center for Policy Research and Policy Studies, June 2000), p. 9.

²⁸ Jessica Pearson, Nancy Thoennes, and Lanae Davis, with Jane Venohr, David Price, and Tracy Griffith, *OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Programs: Client Characteristics and Program Outcomes* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Center for Policy Research and Policy Studies (HHS Contract No. 100-98-0015), September 2003).

income, never-married parents and their children. Research indicated that although many of the fathers in these families are involved with their children during the early childhood years, this involvement tends to diminish over time, often with negative consequences for the children. The PFF initiative is aimed at helping fathers work with the mothers of their children in sharing the legal, financial, and emotional responsibilities of parenthood.

In March 2000, HHS approved state waivers for the three-year Partners for Fragile Families (PFF) Demonstration projects. The purpose of the demonstration projects was to develop new ways for CSE agencies and community-based nonprofit and faith-based organizations to work together to help young noncustodial fathers (ages 16 to 25—who had not yet established paternity and who had little or no involvement with the CSE program) obtain employment, health, and social services; make child support payments to their children; learn parenting skills; and work with the mothers of their children to build stronger parenting partnerships. The PFF demonstration operated from 2000 to 2003 in 13 projects in nine states.²⁹ The demonstration project sites were located in California, Colorado, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.³⁰ According to HHS, of the \$9.7 million in federal funding budgeted for the projects, \$7.1 million was spent. An additional \$1.4 million was spent for an evaluation of the projects.

The underlying theory of the PFF demonstration projects was that by targeting new fathers at a point when they had little or no previous involvement with the CSE system and when they still had an opportunity to develop a positive relationship with the mother of their children and the children themselves, the projects could better assist these young parents to become strong financial and emotional resources for their children. A recent evaluation of the implementation of the PFF projects included the following statement:

Although the concept of PFF was unique when it was developed in 1996, by the time the demonstration was fully implemented, other responsible fatherhood programs had started in many communities nationwide. Independent of PFF, the child support enforcement system was already incorporating more “father-friendly” approaches to service delivery at about the same time PFF was in its developmental stages. The child support system had begun to absorb the lessons learned from earlier fatherhood initiatives (such as the Parents’ Fair Share project and the Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration). By the time PFF was operational, some may have viewed it as less pioneering than when it was conceived several years earlier. In addition, the number of young fathers who had not established paternity for their children decreased in the mid- to late-1990s as a result of the success of in-hospital paternity establishment initiatives across the country that established paternity at the time of a child’s birth. The pool of young fathers without paternity established for their children had diminished in the PFF sites by the time the projects were implemented.³¹

HHS also sponsored two other evaluations of the PFF demonstration projects. Both of the evaluations were conducted by the Urban Institute. One of the Urban Institute reports includes case studies of selected fathers and their families, and the other report provides an analysis of economic and child support outcomes. The outcomes report indicated mixed results. The Urban

²⁹ The Chicago, IL, project withdrew from the demonstration.

³⁰ See <http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/index.shtml> and <http://www.npcl.org/program/pff.htm>.

³¹ The Urban Institute. *The Implementation of the Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration Projects*, by Karin Martinson, John Trutko, Demetra Smith Nightingale, Pamela A. Holcomb, and Burst S. Barnow, June 2007. See <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/07/PFF/imp/>.

Institute conducted a process and outcome evaluation interviewing all service providers (including child support enforcement, community-based organizations, and partner agencies) and analyzing client data matched with administrative wage data before and after the PFF program. This evaluation did not have a control group. According to the report, employment rates for participants before and after the program were basically low and unchanged (about 58% of PFF participants were employed six months before the demonstration and 59% of PFF participants were employed 6-12 months after enrollment in the demonstration). Although quarterly earnings of PFF participants increased after enrollment in the demonstration, at the end of 12 months, participants generally had poverty-level incomes. In contrast, the report indicates that there was a substantial increase in child support orders. At enrollment, about 14% of PFF participants had a child support order, whereas two years after enrollment, 35% of PFF participants had a child support order. For those PFF participants who paid child support, the average child support payment was \$1,569 for the first year after enrollment and \$2,296 for the second year after enrollment. The report also noted that, on average, about five monthly child support payments were made in the first year after enrollment and about seven monthly payments were made in the second year after enrollment.³²

Other Evaluations

Although several new evaluations are underway to scientifically determine whether responsible fatherhood programs work, they are many years away from impact findings. Most are still at the initial stage of providing information on the implementation of the responsible fatherhood programs. An HHS-sponsored evaluation of responsible fatherhood programs, called the National Evaluation of the Responsible Fatherhood, Marriage and Family Strengthening Grants for Incarcerated and Reentering Fathers and Their Partners (MFS-IP), began in 2006. The evaluation is a multiyear (quasi-experimental) study that is expected to run from 2006 through 2013. A final report on the impact of the program is expected between 2011 and 2013.³³

The Obama Administration supports evidence-based programs as a way to use limited resources more effectively. The 2011 application announcement for responsible fatherhood programs indicates that as a condition of acceptance of a responsible fatherhood award, grantees are required to participate fully in HHS-sponsored evaluations. HHS is investing resources in multiple federal evaluations to document successes, challenges, and lessons from responsible fatherhood programs that will provide useful information to program operators and policymakers. The 2011 application announcement for responsible fatherhood programs requires that grantees operate comprehensive responsible fatherhood programs that integrate robust economic stability services, healthy marriage activities, and activities designed to foster responsible parenting.³⁴

³² Karin Martinson, Demetra Smith Nightingale, Pamela Holcomb, Burt Barnow, and John Trutko, "Partners for Fragile Families Demonstration Projects: Employment and Child Support Outcomes and Trends," The Urban Institute, September 2007.

³³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Initiative—Further Progress Is Needed in Developing a Risk-Based Monitoring Approach to Help HHS Improve Program Oversight," GAO-08-1002, September 2008. Also see National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, "What Works in Fatherhood Programs? Ten Lessons From Evidence-Based Practice," by Jacinta Bronte-Tinkew, Allison Horowitz, and Allison Metz, at <http://www.fatherhood.gov>.

³⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Family Assistance, Pathways to Responsible Fatherhood Grants, June 28, 2011, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/foa/view/HHS-2011-ACF-OFA-FK-0194>. Also see Virginia Knox, Philip A. Cowan, Carolyn Pape Cowan, and Elana Bildner, "Policies That Strengthen Fatherhood and Family Relationships: What Do We Know and What Do We Need to (continued...)"

Thus, even though the emphasis of the Obama Administration is on more robust programs that can demonstrate effectiveness, the 2011 Application announcement indicates that preference will be given to grantees that operated DRA responsible fatherhood programs.

Issues

An underlying tension in the debate on fatherhood initiatives is the concerns of some women's and mothers' rights groups, such as the National Women's Law Center and the National Organization for Women (NOW), that an emphasis on the importance of fathers may lead to undervaluing single-parent families maintained by mothers; that services for fathers may be at the expense of services for mothers; and that the "pro-fatherhood" discourse might give fathers' rights groups some leverage in challenging child custody, child support, and visitation arrangements. Some analysts contend that the policy debate on fatherhood initiatives must be based on the view that the welfare of fathers, mothers, and children are intertwined and interdependent; otherwise, the debate will be very divisive and unproductive.³⁵

Many issues are associated with the federal government's support of fatherhood initiatives. A few examples are: Is the goal of federal policy to promote and support the involvement of fathers in their children's lives regardless of the father's relationship with the children's mother? What if the father has children by more than one woman? What is the federal policy with regard to incarcerated parents and parents recently released from prison? Does the federal government support counseling, education, and supervised visitation for abusive fathers so that they can reconnect with their children?³⁶

The discussion below examines two issues that will likely impact the success of congressional fatherhood initiatives. The first deals with the role of the CSE agency in fatherhood programs. Presently, the CSE program is the starting place for many fatherhood programs. Some analysts contend that since many noncustodial parents have a negative view of the CSE program, the use of the CSE program to recruit fathers does not bode well for the success of such programs. Several of the fatherhood bills would make competitive grants available to community organizations and other groups that have experience in working with low-income men. Many of the fatherhood bills introduced in recent Congresses included evaluation components. The second issue examines father involvement in the context of the father's relationship to the child's mother. The second issue is based on the premise that formal marital relationships last longer and are more conducive to long-term interaction between fathers and children than other types of relationships.

(...continued)

Know?" MDRC, 2009.

³⁵ William J. Doherty, Edward F. Kouneski, and Martha Farrell Erickson, *Responsible Fathering: An Overview and Conceptual Framework—Final Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Center for Policy Research and Policy Studies (HHS-100-93-0012), September 1996).

³⁶ For additional information, see Maria Cancian, Daniel R. Meyer, and Eunhee Han, "Child Support: Responsible Fatherhood and the Quid Pro Quo," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 635, no. 140, 2011.

CSE System and Noncustodial Parents Often at Odds

During the period from FY1978 to FY2008, child support payments collected by the CSE agencies increased from \$1 billion to \$26.6 billion. Moreover, the program has made significant improvements in other program measures as well, such as the number of parents located, paternities established, and child support orders established. Advocates of the CSE program say that this dramatic program performance is aside from the indirect and intangible benefits of the program, such as increased personal responsibility and welfare cost-avoidance. Critics of the CSE program contend that even with an unprecedented array of “big brother” enforcement tools such as license (professional, driver’s, recreational) and passport revocation; seizure of banking accounts, retirement funds, and lottery winnings; and automatic income withholding from pay checks, the program still collects only 20% of child support obligations for which it has responsibility and collects payments for only 57% of its caseload.

Although the CSE program has historically been the policy answer to the problem of father absence, because its focus until recently was exclusively on financial support, it has had the practical effect of alienating many low-income fathers who are unable to meet their child support obligations. Some policy analysts maintain that fathers are, in effect, devalued when their role in their children’s lives is based solely on their cash contributions. They argue that public policies are needed to support the father’s role as nurturer, disciplinarian, mentor, and moral instructor.³⁷

Information obtained from noncustodial fathers for various surveys and studies consistently tells the same story. Not surprisingly, noncustodial parents, especially low-income fathers, prefer informal child support agreements between themselves and the child’s mother wherein they contribute cash support when they can and provide noncash aid such as taking care of the children from time to time and buying food, clothing, presents, etc., as often as they can. Many noncustodial fathers maintain that the CSE system is dismissive of their financial condition and continues to pursue child support payments (current as well as arrearages) even when it knows that many of them can barely support themselves. They argue that for welfare families, the CSE program generally does not improve their child’s well-being because their child support payments are used to benefit the state and federal government (i.e., welfare reimbursement) rather than their child. They contend that the CSE program causes conflicts between them and their child’s mother because the women often use it as leverage by threatening to report them to CSE authorities, take them back to court, have more of their wages garnished, or have them arrested.³⁸

Many observers maintain that noncustodial parents and the CSE program have irreconcilable differences and that the most that should be expected is for the noncustodial parent to clearly understand the purposes of the CSE program, the requirements imposed on the custodial parent, the noncustodial parents’ rights to have their child support payments modified if they incur a financial change in circumstances, and that they as noncustodial parents have a moral and societal responsibility to have (and to build) a loving relationship with their children.³⁹ If the CSE

³⁷ Wade F. Horn and Isabel V. Sawhill, *Making Room for Daddy: Fathers, Marriage, and Welfare Reform*, Brookings Institution Working Paper (Washington, DC, April 26, 2001), p. 4.

³⁸ Maureen Waller and Robert Plotnick, “A Failed Relationship? Low-Income Families and the Child Support Enforcement System,” *Focus* (University of Wisconsin-Madison. Institute for Research on Poverty), vol. 21, no. 1 (spring 2000), pp. 12-17. See also *Family Ties: Improving Paternity Establishment Practices and Procedures for Low-Income Mothers, Fathers and Children* (Washington, DC: National Women’s Law Center and Center on Fathers, Families, and Public Policy, 2000), pp. 9-11.

³⁹ Waller and Plotnick, “A Failed Relationship?”

program continues to be the entrance to fatherhood programs, most observers contend that the fact that the CSE program has not been effective in gaining the cooperation and trust of many noncustodial parents must be acknowledged and addressed. Several analysts suggest that to be successful, fatherhood programs may need to operate independently of the formal CSE system.

Others assert that more than any other agency of state government, the CSE program has the responsibility and is in the position to reach out to fathers who need supportive services. They state that CSE agencies are already involved in forging relationships with fathers through partnerships with community-based organizations. They also note that CSE agencies provide a natural link to coordinate with TANF agencies to help families achieve self-sufficiency.⁴⁰

Noncustodial Father Involvement vs. Promotion of Marriage vs. Maintenance of Fragile Families

The first finding included in the 1996 welfare reform law is that marriage is the foundation of a successful society. The second finding is that marriage is an essential institution of a successful society that promotes the interests of children.⁴¹ However, some child welfare advocates argue that marriage is not necessarily the best alternative for all women and their children. It is generally agreed that single-parent families are a better alternative for children than living with an abusive father. Many observers caution that government must be careful about supporting programs that provide cash incentives to induce people to marry or that coerce people into marrying. They note the problems associated with child-bride marriages and the short-term and often unhappy nature of the so-called “shotgun” marriage. Others respond that many long-lasting marriages were based on financial alliances (e.g., to increase economic status, family wealth, status in the community, etc.). They also point out that most government programs are sensitive to the issues of domestic violence and include supports to prevent or end such actions.

Many young children live with both of their parents who are not married but who are cohabiting. Noting this, some analysts argue that coercive policies designed to promote certain types of family structures (e.g., nuclear families) at the expense of others may undermine nontraditional family relationships. They contend that more emphasis should be placed on trying to meet the needs of these fragile families to enable them to stay together for longer periods of time. They maintain that if these parents wanted to be married they would be married.⁴² They also point out that because of the complexity of many family relationships, there are no easy answers. From their perspective, a single-focus policy, no matter whether it aims to support traditional family relationships or fragile families, can place children in less desirable situations. For instance, promoting marriage of biological parents may result in supporting situations where some children in the household have a stepparent if all the children are not from the same union. Similarly,

⁴⁰ National Child Support Enforcement Association, *Resolution on Fatherhood Initiatives*, adopted by the NCSEA Board of Directors on July 29, 2000, http://www.ncsea.org/files/2000_fatherhood_resol-final.pdf.

⁴¹ The majority of pre-TANF evaluations of welfare initiatives that examine family formation decisions have found little, if any, impact of state policies on decisions to marry. One recent exception is an evaluation of the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). In this program, compared to those who were subject to the AFDC requirements, more single-parent participants subject to new policies under MFIP got married and fewer of the two-parent participants had divorced within three years after the program began.

⁴² See “Is Marriage a Viable Objective for Fragile Families?” *Fragile Families Research Brief 9* (Princeton University: Bendheim-Thoman Center for Research on Child Wellbeing, July 2002).

promoting fragile families could also result in supporting situations where a biological parent is absent if all of the children in the household are not all from the same union.

Some pro-marriage analysts point out that about 75% of children born to cohabiting parents will see their parents separate before they reach age 16, compared to about 33% of those born to married parents.⁴³ Some observers note that even with supports it is unlikely that fragile families (unmarried couple) will remain together as long as married families. Thus, they argue that the promotion of marriage should be incorporated into fatherhood programs if the goal is lifetime involvement of fathers in the lives of their children.

In contrast, fatherhood initiatives are sometimes viewed as incompatible with initiatives that encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families, and with initiatives that promote marriage. In fact, many observers argue that the focus should be the participation of fathers in their children's lives, regardless of the marital status of the parents. As mentioned earlier, the TANF law states that the second purpose of the block grant is to "end the dependence of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage." The fourth purpose of the TANF block grant is to "encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families." There was some discussion about whether the fourth purpose means married-couple families or just two parents who are involved in their children's lives, regardless of whether they are married or even living together. In late 1999, the Clinton Administration issued *A Guide on Funding for Children and Families* through the TANF program, which broadly interpreted two-parent families to mean not only married-couple families, but also never-married, separated, and divorced parents, whether living together or not. Thus, many states classify their fatherhood programs and programs that encourage visitation by noncustodial parents under the rubric of fulfilling the purposes of the TANF program.⁴⁴

In addition, it should be noted that some research indicates that there may be a racial component in the marriage promotion versus fatherhood involvement debate. In 2007, 71.6% of black births were to unmarried women, whereas only 27.8% of white births were to unmarried women. Given this demographic reality of black and white families in the United States, the authors of the study⁴⁵ contend that proposals that earmark five times as much money for marriage promotion as for responsible fatherhood promotion⁴⁶ seem "racially insensitive." (Readers should note that P.L. 109-171 funds marriage promotion grants at twice the amount of responsible fatherhood grants, i.e., \$100 million per year for five years versus \$50 million per year for five years.⁴⁷)

⁴³ David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, "Should We Live Together? What Young Adults Need to Know about Cohabitation before Marriage, A Comprehensive Review of Recent Research," Second Edition, 2002.

⁴⁴ Wade Horn, "Wedding Bell Blues: Marriage and Welfare Reform," *Brookings Review*, summer 2001, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁵ Ronald B. Mincy and Chien-Chung Huang, *The M Word: The Rise and Fall of Interracial Coalitions on Fathers and Welfare Reform*. Bowling Green State University Working Paper 02-7 (February 25, 2002), pp. 1-5, 32.

⁴⁶ H.R. 4737, as passed by the House in the 107th Congress, authorized \$100 million annually for five years for competitive matching grants that require a dollar-for-dollar match for marriage promotion activities, resulting in total funding of \$200 million annually for five years. Further, an additional \$100 million per year for five years was authorized for research and demonstration grants and technical assistance related to the healthy marriage promotion activities. In contrast, H.R. 4737 (107th Congress) authorized \$20 million annually for five years for responsible fatherhood grants.

⁴⁷ In contrast, S. 1309 and H.R. 2979, which are pending in the 111th Congress, would equalize funding in the healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs; both programs would be funded at \$100 million per year for specific years.

Legislative Action

During the 106th Congress, President Clinton's FY2001 budget included \$255 million for the first year of a proposed "Fathers Work/Families Win" initiative to help low-income noncustodial parents and low-income working families work and support their children. The "Fathers Work/Families Win" initiative would have been administered by the Department of Labor (DOL). The "Fathers Work" component (\$125 million) would have been limited to noncustodial parents (primarily fathers) and the "Families Win" component (\$130 million) would have been targeted more generally to low-income families.

The proposed "Fathers Work" grant program was designed to help low-income noncustodial parents who were not living with their children carry out their financial and emotional responsibilities to their children. The proposed "Families Win" grant program was designed to help "hard-pressed" working families obtain the supports and skills they need to get a job, succeed in the job, and avoid TANF assistance. These funds were intended to leverage existing resources to help families retain jobs and upgrade skills and get connected to critical work supports, such as child care, child support, health care, food stamps, earned income tax credit, housing, and transportation. Neither the House nor Senate FY2001 appropriations bill (H.R. 4577, 106th Congress) for the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies included funding for the Fathers Work/Families Win proposal.

From the beginning of his presidency, President George W. Bush indicated his support for responsible fatherhood initiatives. President Bush's FY2002 budget (issued in February 2001, 107th Congress) proposed \$64 million in 2002 (\$315 million over five years) to strengthen the role of fathers in the lives of families. This initiative would have provided competitive grants to faith-based and community organizations that help unemployed or low-income fathers and their families avoid or leave cash welfare, as well as to programs that promote successful parenting and strengthen marriage. The initiative also would have funded projects of national significance that support expansion of state and local responsible fatherhood efforts.

President Bush's FY2003 budget proposed \$20 million (for FY2003) for competitive grants to community and faith-based organizations for programs that help noncustodial fathers support their families to avoid or leave cash welfare, become more involved in their children's lives, and promote successful parenting and encourage and support healthy marriages and married fatherhood.

President Bush's FY2004 budget proposed \$20 million annually (for FY2004-FY2008) for promotion and support of responsible fatherhood and healthy marriage. The funding was expected to promote and support involved, committed, and responsible fatherhood and encourage the formation and stability of healthy marriages. The FY2004 budget proposal also would have gradually increased the annual funding of the CSE access and visitation grant program from \$10 million annually to \$20 million annually by FY2007.

President Bush's FY2005 budget proposed \$50 million (for FY2005) for 75 competitive grants to faith-based and community organizations, together with Indian tribes and tribal organizations, to encourage and help fathers to support their families, avoid welfare, and improve their ability to manage family business affairs, and to support healthy marriages and married fatherhood.

President Bush's FY2006 budget proposed \$40 million (for FY2006) for a grant program to public and nonprofit community organizations, including religious organizations, and Indian tribes and tribal organizations, for demonstration service projects to help noncustodial fathers become more involved in their children's lives and to encourage and support healthy marriages between parents raising children.

President Bush's FY2007 budget proposed \$100 million for competitive matching grants to states for marriage promotion. It also included the \$150 million for healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs that was included in P.L. 109-171 as part of welfare reauthorization. As noted in this report, pursuant to P.L. 109-171, \$50 million is specifically allocated for responsible fatherhood programs.

President Bush's FY2008 budget included the \$150 million for healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood programs that was included in P.L. 109-171 as part of welfare reauthorization. As noted, pursuant to P.L. 109-171, \$50 million is specifically allocated for responsible fatherhood programs for each of FY2006-FY2010.

President Obama also is a supporter of responsible fatherhood programs. As a senator, he was a cosponsor of a responsible fatherhood bill in both the 109th and 110th Congresses. As president, he has included in each of his budgets proposals to revise and increase funding for responsible fatherhood programs.

106th Congress

During the 106th Congress, legislation was twice passed by the House (but not acted on by the Senate)—H.R. 3073, the proposed Fathers Count Act of 1999, and H.R. 4678, the proposed Child Support Distribution Act of 2000—that would have authorized funding (\$140 million over two years in H.R. 3073 and \$140 million over four years in H.R. 4678) to establish a program (usually referred to as fatherhood initiatives) to make grants to public or private entities for projects designed to promote marriage, promote successful parenting and the involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, and help fathers improve their economic status by providing job-related services to them.

107th Congress

During the 107th Congress, several bills (H.R. 1300/S. 653, H.R. 1471, S. 685, S. 940/H.R. 1990, H.R. 2893, H.R. 3625, H.R. 4090⁴⁸, S. 2524, and H.R. 4737) that included fatherhood initiatives were introduced, but none were enacted.

⁴⁸ H.R. 4090, as amended, was ordered reported by the House Ways and Means Committee on May 2, 2002 (H.Rept. 107-460, Part 1). The bill would have provided \$20 million in grants per year for a five-year period (FY2003-FY2007) to public entities and nonprofit community entities, including religious organizations, and to Indian tribes and tribal organizations to promote responsible, caring, and effective parenting and to encourage positive father involvement, including the positive involvement of nonresident fathers; enhance the abilities and commitment of unemployed or low-income fathers to provide support for their families and to avoid or leave welfare; improve fathers' ability to effectively manage family business affairs; and encourage and support healthy marriages and married fatherhood. Note: H.R. 4737, a bill that included identical "fatherhood" provisions, passed the House on May 16, 2002.

The purposes of the fatherhood programs in the bills introduced generally were the same: fatherhood programs must be designed to promote marriage through counseling, mentoring, and other activities; promote successful parenting through counseling, providing information about good parenting practices including payment of child support, and other activities; and help noncustodial parents and their families avoid or leave cash welfare by providing work-first services, job training, subsidized employment, career-advancing education, and other activities.

However, the structure of the fatherhood programs differed. For example, H.R. 4737, as amended and passed by the House, would have added a new part C to Title IV of the Social Security Act to provide competitive grants to public and private entities to operate an array of fatherhood programs. The competitive grants would have been administered by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The appropriation amount for the fatherhood grants was set at \$20 million a year for each of FY2003-FY2007; up to 15% of the annual appropriation was to be available for the cost of various demonstration projects and evaluations of the competitive grants.

In contrast, H.R. 4737, as amended in the nature of a substitute by the Senate Finance Committee, appeared to have more of an emphasis on helping low-income noncustodial parents find and retain work. It would have amended part D of Title IV of the Social Security Act (i.e., the Child Support section) to provide grants to states to (1) establish a noncustodial parent employment grant program and (2) conduct policy reviews and develop recommendations, and conduct demonstration projects with the goals of obtaining and retaining employment for low-income noncustodial parents, increasing child support payments, increasing the involvement of low-income noncustodial parents with their children, and coordinating services for low-income noncustodial parents. The HHS Secretary and the Secretary of Labor would have jointly awarded grants to eligible states for the purpose of establishing, in coordination with counties and other local governments, supervised employment programs for noncustodial parents who have a history of irregular payment or nonpayment of child support obligations and who are determined to be in need of employment services in order to pay their child support obligations. The appropriation amount for the noncustodial parent employment program was set at \$25 million a year for each of FY2004-FY2007. The appropriation amount for the grants, administered by the HHS Secretary, to states for policy reviews, recommendations, and demonstration projects also was set at \$25 million a year for each of FY2004-FY2007.

Although H.R. 4737, amended, was passed by the House on May 16, 2002 (H.Rept. 107-460, Part 1), and reported favorably in the nature of a substitute by the Senate Finance Committee (S.Rept. 107-221) on July 25, 2002, it was not passed by the full Senate.

108th Congress

The 108th Congress introduced several bills that included responsible fatherhood provisions (S. 5, S. 448, S. 604, S. 657, S. 1443, and S. 2830; H.R. 4 and H.R. 936). None of the bills became law.

On February 13, 2003, the House passed H.R. 4 (108th Congress), a welfare reauthorization bill (that was essentially identical to H.R. 4737 as passed by the House in 2002) that would have provided \$20 million per year for each of FY2004-FY2008 for a responsible fatherhood grant program.

On September 10, 2003, the Senate Finance Committee approved its version of H.R. 4 (S.Rept. 108-162), which would have established a \$75 million responsible fatherhood program composed of four components for each of FY2004-FY2008: (1) a \$20 million grant program for up to 10

eligible states to conduct demonstration programs; (2) a \$30 million grant for eligible entities to conduct demonstration programs; (3) \$5 million for a nationally recognized nonprofit fatherhood promotion organization to develop and promote a responsible fatherhood media campaign; and (4) a \$20 million block grant for states to conduct responsible fatherhood media campaigns. Although H.R. 4 was debated on the Senate floor during the period March 29-April 1, 2004, consideration of the bill was not completed when a motion to limit debate on the bill failed to garner the necessary 60 votes. The Senate did not bring the bill back to the floor before the end of the session.

During the period from 2002 to 2004, the responsible fatherhood bills that were passed by the House were part of welfare reauthorization legislation. (The funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant, mandatory child care, and the abstinence education block grant—which were part of the 1996 welfare reform legislation (P.L. 104-193) whose funding authority expired on September 30, 2002—continued under a number of temporary extension measures.) Welfare reauthorization legislation was not enacted during this period.

109th Congress

The 109th Congress introduced several bills that included responsible fatherhood provisions. A couple of the bills were standalone bills that had been introduced in a previous Congress (S. 3607 and S. 3803) and some responsible fatherhood provisions were included in welfare reauthorization bills (H.R. 240/S. 105, S. 6, and S. 667). The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (S. 1932), which also included a provision that provided competitive grants for responsible fatherhood activities, was passed by Congress and enacted into law.

On January 4, 2005, a TANF reauthorization bill (H.R. 240) was introduced in the 109th Congress. It included provisions that authorized the HHS Secretary to make competitive grants totaling \$20 million for each of FY2006-FY2010 to public and nonprofit community organizations, including religious organizations, and Indian tribes and tribal organizations for responsible fatherhood demonstration programs. The purposes of the fatherhood programs were to (1) promote responsible, caring, and effective parenting and encouraging positive father involvement, including the positive involvement of nonresident fathers; (2) enhance the abilities and commitment of unemployed or low-income fathers to provide support for their families and to avoid or leave welfare; (3) improve fathers' ability to effectively manage family business affairs; and (4) encourage and support healthy marriages and married fatherhood. Not more than 15% of the annual appropriation would have been available for the costs of two multicity, multistate demonstration projects, projects of national significance that support expansion of state and local responsible fatherhood efforts, and an evaluation of the programs. The fatherhood provisions in H.R. 240 were identical to those that were included in H.R. 4 as passed by the House on February 13, 2003 (108th Congress). S. 105, which is identical to H.R. 240, was introduced in the Senate on January 24, 2005.

On January 24, 2005, another TANF reauthorization bill (S. 6) was introduced in the 109th Congress. It would have established a \$75 million responsible fatherhood program composed of four components for each of FY2006-FY2010: (1) a \$20 million grant program for up to 10 eligible states to conduct demonstration programs; (2) a \$30 million grant for eligible entities to conduct demonstration programs; (3) \$5 million for a nationally recognized nonprofit fatherhood promotion organization to develop and promote a responsible fatherhood media campaign; and (4) a \$20 million block grant for states to conduct responsible fatherhood media campaigns. The

purposes of the demonstration grants were to promote responsible fatherhood through (1) marriage promotion (through counseling, mentoring, disseminating information about the advantages of marriage and two-parent involvement for children, etc.), (2) parenting activities (through counseling, mentoring, mediation, disseminating information about good parenting practices, etc.), and (3) fostering economic stability of fathers (through work first services, job search, job training, subsidized employment, education, etc.). The fatherhood provisions in S. 6 were identical to those that were included in H.R. 4 as passed by the Senate Finance Committee on October 3, 2003 (H.Rept. 108-162, 108th Congress).

On March 17, 2005, the Senate Finance Committee reported S. 667, a TANF reauthorization bill. It would have established a \$76 million responsible fatherhood program composed of five components for each of FY2006-FY2010. It would have (1) *appropriated* \$20 million for a grant program for up to 10 eligible states to conduct demonstration programs, (2) *appropriated* \$30 million for grants for eligible entities to conduct demonstration programs, (3) authorized \$5 million for a nationally recognized nonprofit fatherhood promotion organization to develop and promote a responsible fatherhood media campaign, (4) authorized a \$20 million block grant for states to conduct responsible fatherhood media campaigns, and (5) authorized \$1 million for a nationally recognized nonprofit research and education fatherhood organization to establish a national resource center for responsible fatherhood. The fatherhood provisions in S. 667 were almost identical to those in S. 6, except that funding for the demonstration grants to states and eligible entities would have been assured because money was appropriated in the bill for those activities (S.Rept. 109-51, 109th Congress).

On December 19, 2005, the House passed the conference report on S. 1932, the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (H.Rept. 109-362). On December 21, the Senate passed the conference report on S. 1932 with amendments. The conference report was subsequently passed again by the House on February 1, 2006. On February 8, 2006, President Bush signed S. 1932 into P.L. 109-171. Among other things, P.L. 109-171 reauthorized the TANF block grant at \$16.5 billion annually through FY2010 and included a provision that provides up to \$50 million per year (for each of FY2006-FY2010) in competitive grants to states, territories, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and public and nonprofit community organizations, including religious organizations, for responsible fatherhood initiatives.

Under P.L. 109-171, responsible fatherhood funds can be spent on activities to promote responsible fatherhood through (1) marriage promotion (through counseling, mentoring, disseminating information about the advantages of marriage and two-parent involvement for children, etc.), (2) parenting activities (through counseling, mentoring, mediation, disseminating information about good parenting practices, etc.), (3) fostering economic stability of fathers (through work first services, job search, job training, subsidized employment, education, etc.), or (4) contracting with a nationally recognized nonprofit fatherhood promotion organization to develop, promote, or distribute a media campaign to encourage the appropriate involvement of parents in the lives of their children, focusing particularly on responsible fatherhood; and/or to develop a national clearinghouse to help states and communities in their efforts to promote and support marriage and responsible fatherhood.

110th Congress

Two bills that included responsible fatherhood provisions were introduced in the 110th Congress. S. 1626 was introduced by Senator Bayh, Senator Obama, and Senator Lincoln, and a House companion bill, H.R. 3395, was introduced by Representative Danny Davis (et al.). Among other

things, S. 1626/H.R. 3395, the proposed Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2007, would have increased funding for the responsible fatherhood grants (authorized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005, P.L. 109-171) to \$100 million per year for each of FY2008-FY2010. (The total for the Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood grants would have increased from \$150 million to \$200 million per year for each of FY2008-FY2010.) The bills (S. 1626 and H.R. 3395) did not move out of committee.

111th Congress

Three bills that included responsible fatherhood provisions were introduced in the 111th Congress, all of which had been introduced in a previous Congress. None of the bills were passed by Congress.

S. 1309, the proposed Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009, was introduced on June 19, 2009, by Senators Bayh, Lincoln, and Burriss. The House companion bill, H.R. 2979, was also introduced on June 19 by Representative Danny K. Davis (et al.). The House bill is referred to as the Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009. (These bills are almost identical to bills that were introduced in the 110th Congress.) The bills would amend the TANF title of the Social Security Act (Title IV-A) to (1) increase funding for responsible fatherhood programs from \$50 million per year to \$100 million per year (for each of FY2008-FY2010); (2) expand procedures to address domestic violence; (3) expand activities promoting responsible fatherhood; (4) provide grants to healthy family partnerships for domestic violence prevention, for services for families and individuals affected by domestic violence, and for developing and implementing best practices to prevent domestic violence; and (5) eliminate the separate TANF work participation rate for two-parent families. The bills would also make several changes to the CSE program (Title IV-D of the Social Security Act). It would prohibit a state from collecting any amount owed to it by reason of costs it has incurred for the birth of a child for whom support rights have been assigned. They would require a state to make a full distribution of collected child support to the family. They would condition continued approval of a state plan under Title IV-D upon state assessment of its policies with respect to barriers to employment and financial support of children. The bills also would direct the HHS Secretary to award grants to states for an employment demonstration project involving a court- or state child support agency-supervised program for noncustodial parents so they can pay child support obligations. In addition, the bills would direct the Secretary of Labor to award grants for transitional jobs programs and for public-private career pathways partnerships to help disadvantaged parents obtain employment.

S. 939, the proposed Protecting Adoption and Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Act of 2009, was introduced by Senator Landrieu on April 30, 2009. S. 939 would require the HHS Secretary to establish an automated National Putative Father Registry. Among other things, S. 939 would direct the Secretary to establish a nationwide responsible fatherhood and putative father registry educational campaign designed to (1) inform men about the National Putative Father Registry, the advantages of registering with a State Putative Father Registry, and the rights and responsibilities of putative fathers; and (2) inform women about the National Registry and its potential role in a pending or planned adoption or a termination of a putative father's rights. In addition, it would require each state that desires to receive such a grant to develop and implement a state plan for promoting responsible fatherhood and permanency for children.

Administration's FY2011 Budget—Proposal for a new Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund

The Obama Administration's FY2011 budget included a proposal to redirect funds from the current Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Programs (\$150 million per year through FY2010; the responsible fatherhood portion is \$50 million per year) to the proposed \$500 million Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund. The proposed Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund would have been available for one year (FY2011) to provide three-year competitive grants to states.

The proposed Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund would have created equal funding streams to support the following two objectives: (1) to support state-initiated comprehensive responsible fatherhood initiatives, including those with a marriage component, that rely on strong partnerships with community-based organizations; and (2) to support state-initiated comprehensive family self-sufficiency demonstrations that seek to improve child and family outcomes by addressing the employment and self-sufficiency needs of custodial parents who face serious barriers to self sufficiency. The \$500 million fund would have been divided equally between the two components. Grantees would have been required to participate in a rigorous evaluation as a condition of receiving funding. Grantees would have been able to use the funding for program administration, monitoring, technical assistance, and research and evaluation.⁴⁹

The core elements of the fatherhood initiatives would typically have included co-parenting services and conflict resolution skills development; connection to job training and other employment services; child support enforcement case management assistance; employment preparation services; training subsidies; legal services; substance abuse and mental health treatment (typically, through partnerships with public agencies and community-based providers); linkages to domestic violence prevention programs; and linkages to public agencies and community-based providers offering housing assistance, benefits enrollment, and other services. Grantees would have been required to demonstrate strong linkages with state CSE programs, and there would be a preference for applicants that intend to make resources available to community-based organizations to help implement components of the proposed initiatives. In addition, grantees would have been required to ensure that the new programs address issues related to domestic violence and have in place a plan to reduce the risk of domestic violence.⁵⁰

Grantees of the family innovation portion of the proposed fund would have been required to develop promising new approaches in areas such as (1) identifying families that have serious barriers to employment, including strategies that use mechanisms of ongoing assessment or focus on families at risk for involvement in the child welfare system; (2) implementing strategies to help families address these barriers and also prepare for employment; (3) promoting child well-being in highly disadvantaged families, including child-only cases; and (4) supporting those with barriers who find jobs so they can sustain employment.⁵¹

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Health And Human Services (ACF), "FY2011 Congressional Justification: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)," pp. 304-305 <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/olab/budget/2011/TANF.pdf>.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 305.

⁵¹ Ibid.

According to one budget document, “The Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund will serve as a catalyst for innovative service models that integrate a variety of service streams. The results from these demonstrations could form the basis for possible future TANF and CSE program changes at the federal or state level based on a multidimensional picture of the dynamics of family functioning and material self-sufficiency and child well-being.”⁵² The Fatherhood, Marriage, and Families Innovation Fund proposal was not passed by either the House or the Senate.

Increased Funding for Responsible Fatherhood Grants

Although none of the responsible fatherhood bills introduced in the 111th Congress were passed, the responsible fatherhood program was extended for another year and its funding was increased from \$50 million to \$75 million. P.L. 111-291 (enacted December 8, 2010) extended funding for the Title IV-A Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants through FY2011. For FY2011, P.L. 111-291 appropriated \$75 million for awarding funds for healthy marriage promotion activities and \$75 million for awarding funds for activities promoting responsible fatherhood. The result is that the Title IV-A Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood programs, which were funded at \$150 million annually⁵³ from FY2006 through FY2010, are now to be funded for an additional year (FY2011) on an equal basis.

112th Congress

H.R. 2193, the Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2011, was introduced on June 15, 2011, by Representative Danny Davis (et al.). Similar to the bill introduced in the 111th Congress, H.R. 2193, among other things, would reauthorize and provide \$75 million per year for responsible fatherhood programs for each of the years FY2011 through FY2015. The bill would direct the HHS Secretary to award grants to states for an employment demonstration project involving a court- or state child support agency supervised-employment program for noncustodial parents who have barriers to employment and a history of nonpayment, so that they can pay their child support obligations. It would direct the Labor Secretary to award grants for transitional jobs programs and for public-private career pathways partnerships. It also would amend Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to (1) condition continued approval of a state plan upon state assessment of its policies with respect to barriers to employment and financial support of children, (2) prohibit a state from collecting any amount owed it by reason of costs it has incurred for the birth of a child for whom support rights have been assigned, and (3) require a state to make a full distribution of collected child support to the family. The bill would amend Title IV-A of the Social Security Act to (1) prohibit a state from conditioning receipt of TANF or certain other benefits on assignment to the state of certain child support rights, (2) prohibit a state from conditioning receipt of TANF or certain other benefits on participation in a healthy marriage or responsible fatherhood program, and (3) eliminate the separate TANF work participation rate for two-parent families. The bill would provide grants to healthy family partnerships for domestic violence prevention, for services for families and individuals affected by domestic violence, and

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ As mentioned earlier, the healthy marriage grants were funded at about \$100 million annually and the responsible fatherhood grant were funded at \$50 million annually.

for developing and implementing best practices to prevent domestic violence. In addition, the bill would amend the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 with respect to (1) deductions from family income for child support received in order to qualify for food stamps, (2) verification of child support payments, and (3) inclusion of economic opportunities programs in qualifying work programs. Moreover, the bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code to increase the credit percentage under the earned income tax credit for eligible individuals with no qualifying children.

Administration's FY2012 Budget

The Obama Administration's FY2012 budget proposed continued funding of \$150 million to support Healthy Marriages and Responsible Fatherhood programs for FY2012. These funds would be split equally among Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood activities.

Pursuant to P.L. 111-291, the Claims Resolution Act of 2010, the \$75 million in Healthy Marriage funds provided for FY2011 may be used for a number of services, including pre-marital education; marriage enhancement programs; divorce reduction programs; marriage mentoring programs; and marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs, which may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement.

The \$75 million in Responsible Fatherhood funds provided for FY2011 may be used for fatherhood activities intended to promote or sustain marriage, responsible parenting, economic stability, and media campaigns that reach families with important messages about responsible fatherhood.

The Administration's FY2012 budget proposal also would make changes to the purpose clause of the CSE program to include access and visitation and other fatherhood involvement activities. These activities would become core parts of the CSE program and thereby states would be reimbursed by the federal government for expenditures on such activities at an open-ended 66% matching rate. The budget proposal would require states to establish access and visitation responsibilities in all initial child support orders. It would encourage states to undertake activities that support access and visitation, implementing domestic violence safeguards as a critical component of this new state responsibility. (The estimated cost of the proposal is \$570 million over 10 years).