



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



NRFC State Profile: Louisiana October 2015

This profile describes state and federally funded programs and policies that aim to strengthen families. These programs and policies support parenting and father involvement, promote strong family relationships, enhance fathers' economic stability, and provide support during incarceration and reentry. The profile lists phone numbers and websites for the programs. This information was correct when the profile was written (in 2015) but may change over time.

Programs to Support Responsible Fatherhood and Strengthen Families

Responsible fatherhood programs focus on issues such as enhancing parenting and relationship skills, keeping fathers involved with their children, improving their economic stability, helping them pay child support, and generally helping to strengthen families.

The following state and federally funded programs are available in the state:

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana	Fatherhood/Parenting	Children's Coalition for Northeast Louisiana is a state-funded organization that offers services for fathers including the <i>Positive Parenting Program</i> and the <i>Fatherhood Initiative</i> , which uses the evidence-based <i>Nurturing Father's Program</i> curriculum focused on teaching parenting and nurturing skills to men.	Serves Northeast Louisiana. Website (318) 323-8775
Job Corps	Economic Stability	<i>Job Corps</i> is a federally funded job training program to help low-income men and women ages 16 to 24 with educational and career goals.	Centers are located in New Orleans, Carville, and Shreveport. Website New Orleans: (504) 484-3500 Carville: (225) 642-0699 Shreveport: (318) 227-9331
Louisiana Department of Labor	Economic Stability	The Louisiana Department of Labor offers the <i>LA Works</i> program, which provides job counseling, job placement assistance and referrals, and job	Serves the entire state. Website

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
		readiness skills courses. The program also offers GED preparation and adult basic math and literacy education.	Find the location and phone number of the closest Business and Career Solutions Center
Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Fatherhood/Parenting Incarceration/Reentry	Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections offers parenting skills training for incarcerated fathers and mothers. The program focuses on helping incarcerated parents play an active role in their children's lives.	Serves inmates in state facilities. Headquartered in Baton Rouge. Website Headquarters: (225) 342-6740
Project Celebration, Inc.	Fatherhood/Parenting	Project Celebration, Inc. is a state-funded organization that receives referrals from the court system and the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services to its Family Resource Center. At the Center, parents have access to facilitators, caseworkers, and other community resources to resolve differences and create a plan for successful parenting. Services include supervised visitation and coaching, parenting classes, and family maintenance assistance.	Serves seven parishes in Northwestern Louisiana. Website (318) 256-6242
SMILE Community Action Agency	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	SMILE Community Action Agency is a state- and federally funded organization that provides a range of supportive and employment services for low income families. Its Family Resource/Parenting Center provides education in St. Martin's Parish about the stages of child development, the responsibilities of parenting, stress and anger management, and economic self-sufficiency.	Serves the tri-parish region of St. Martin, Iberia, and Lafayette. Website (337) 234-3272
Total Community Action, Inc.	Economic Stability	Total Community Action, Inc. is a federally funded organization that offers job counseling, career	Serves New Orleans. Website

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
		assessment, adult basic education, and GED instruction for low income families.	(504) 872-0334

Policies to Promote Responsible Fatherhood

Paternity Establishment

Establishing paternity gives a child born outside of marriage the same legal rights and privileges as a child born to married parents. Children gain access to family medical history and rights to inheritance, fathers’ medical and life insurance benefits, social security and veterans’ benefits, and child support. In addition, Native American children gain tribal enrollment rights.

To establish paternity in Louisiana, fathers who are not married to their child's mother can sign an affidavit acknowledging that they are the father of the child at the hospital where the child is born. Hospital personnel are required to provide parents of children born outside of marriage the opportunity to sign an acknowledgment of paternity at the time of birth. Prior to signing an acknowledgment of paternity, an alleged father is strongly encouraged to request a paternity test to establish beyond question that he is the biological father of the child. Paternity tests cost \$62.00 per person. In Louisiana, the probability of paternity must be 99.9 percent or higher to establish paternity.ⁱ

Child Custody

If unmarried or divorced parents cannot reach agreement concerning child custody or visitation, a legal order can be made through the court system. Either parent may be granted custody of the child, or both may share equally in physical custody and/or decision-making responsibilities. There is no legal connection between payment or non-payment of child support and rights to visitation.

In Louisiana, Child Support Enforcement can assist non-custodial parents through the Access and Visitation Program. An Access and Visitation attorney will intervene with the parents and provide mediation to reach a decision. If necessary, the attorney can recommend that parents go to court. In these cases, the judge’s decision is based on the child’s best interest. All non-custodial parents are entitled to visitation rights, unless there are allegations of abuse or a history of violence.ⁱⁱ

Child Support

The Federal Child Support Enforcement Program was established in 1975 as Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to locate noncustodial parents, establish paternity and establish and enforce child support orders. General services available in all states and territories include voluntary in-hospital paternity acknowledgement, genetic testing, explanation of state guidelines for determining child support orders, and review of child support orders at least every three years at the request of either parent. State child support offices are responsible for collection and distribution of child support payments and can modify orders when appropriate. If a parent is behind in their payments, the office may use enforcement tools such as license revocation (including drivers, professional, recreational or occupational licenses), seizure of assets, property liens, passport denial, and federal and state tax refund offsets.ⁱⁱⁱ

In Louisiana, the amount of a child support order is determined by taking into consideration the income of both parents, child care costs incurred due to employment or job search, the cost of the child's health insurance, and extraordinary expenses of the child such as medical or private schooling needs. The Department of Children and Family Services oversees child support in Louisiana and their [website](#) has information on how to apply for services. Their phone number is (888) 524-3578.

The Family and Medical Leave Act

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) protects employees who have worked with the same organization for at least twelve months and worked at least 1,250 hours within the past year. It contains provisions for both fathers and mothers to take time off after the birth or adoption of a child, or during a serious illness, without fear of losing their jobs. Employees in companies with 50 or more employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave, over a one-year period, to care for a new child, recuperate from a serious illness, care for a seriously ill family member, or handle issues arising from a family member's call to active military duty. The FMLA also gives employees the right to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a family member who is seriously injured or becomes ill while on active military duty.^{iv}

In addition to the benefits allowed by the federal FMLA, Louisiana also has a Small Necessities Law under which all employers must give employees up to 16 hours of unpaid leave in any 12-month period to attend, observe, or participate in conferences or classroom activities relating to their children (in school or in day care), if those activities cannot be rescheduled outside of work.

Head Start

Head Start is a federally funded school readiness program for young children from low-income families. The program, currently delivered by about 1,700 local organizations—public and private, non-profit and for-profit—provides preschoolers with comprehensive services, such as education and health screenings, with the goal of building their skills across five school readiness domains: language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical development and health, and social and emotional development. Head Start encourages the role of parents (both mothers and fathers) as their child's first and most important teachers. Programs build relationships with families that support positive parent-child relationships, family well-being, and connections to peers and community. Early Head Start, also managed by the federal Office of Head Start, is directed toward children up to the age of three and their parents. While the program is federally funded and managed, local agencies make decisions regarding service delivery based on the specific needs of their communities; for example, some may opt to include home-based services for families in their programs. Most states have multiple Head Start programs providing services for fathers.

To find information on Head Start programs in Louisiana go to: <http://www.louisianaheadstart.org/> or see the program listing on the [Office of Head Start website](#).

Policies to Promote Economic Stability

Child Care Assistance

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) works with states to provide support for children and their low-income families. Subsidized child care services are available to eligible families through certificates (vouchers), grants, or contracts with providers. Fathers and mothers may select a child care provider that satisfies applicable state and local requirements, including basic health and safety requirements.^v

In Louisiana, the Child Care Assistance program is operated through the Louisiana Department of Education. The program helps low-income families pay for child care while working or attending school or training, and is offered for families that meet income eligibility requirements and have a child under the age of 13 (or 18 if the child has a disability and lives with the applying parent). In order to qualify, the caregiver must work or attend an educational or training program at least 30 hours a week.^{vi}

Rental Assistance

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides rental assistance to low-income families and individuals through a number of methods. HUD subsidizes privately owned apartments, allowing low-income tenants to rent them at reduced rates. In the Public Housing program, local housing agencies manage rental housing for low-income tenants, while HUD provides professional and technical assistance in their planning, development, and management. The Housing Choice Voucher Program, better known as Section 8, provides eligible families and individuals with vouchers that

they can use to pay for all or part of the rent at housing units of their choice. Generally, eligibility for the HUD rental assistance programs is based on annual gross income, assets, family size, and other considerations such as elderly or disabled status. Local housing agencies generally set the fixed eligibility rules for their regions, determine assistance amounts, and manage waiting lists for assistance.^{vii}

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp program, provides low-income individuals (both men and women) and families with funds (delivered in an electronic benefit transfer card, or EBT card) that can be used to purchase food. SNAP is administered within the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services and is federally funded, but applications, delivery, and outreach are handled at the state or local level. In general, individuals and households are eligible to receive SNAP if they have less than \$2,250 in countable resources and earn less than 130 percent of the poverty line in gross monthly income. However, characteristics of recipients (for example, age or disabled status) can affect eligibility requirements, and states have flexibility in determining eligibility, particularly with regard to what is considered a countable resource. In 2014, the average monthly SNAP benefit per individual was \$125.35.^{viii}

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program grants federal funds to states for developing and implementing their own welfare programs that provide assistance and work opportunities to needy families.

In Louisiana, cash assistance is offered to families with children through the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program. There are several eligibility requirements, including that families meet income guidelines, be U.S. citizens or legal residents, and have children who are under 18 (or under 19 if they are in a high school or GED program). Additionally, each applicant/recipient who is pregnant or has a child under 1 year old must attend parenting skills training.^{ix} Work eligible applicants and recipients are required to participate in the STEP Program, which provides opportunities to receive job training, employment, and supportive services. STEP participants receive an initial assessment of workplace literacy, basic skills, educational attainment, and barriers to employment. After the initial assessment, they receive child care, transportation assistance, and other help with finding a job and attaining self-sufficiency.^x

Other Helpful Resources

Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services

The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services offers two instructional guides to promote marriage and relationship skills:

- Marriage Matters
- Raising Your Child Together: A Guide for Unmarried Parents

These guides are available [here](#).

References

- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in Louisiana, see <http://www.dss.state.la.us/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=142#paternity>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on Child Custody in Louisiana, see <http://www.dss.state.la.us/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=186>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css.
- ^{iv} For more information on the Family and Medical leave Act, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.pdf>.
- ^v For more information on the Child Care and Development Fund, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/about/what-we-do>.
- ^{vi} For more information on Child Care Assistance in Louisiana, see <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood/child-care-assistance-program/ccap-eligibility-criteria>.
- ^{vii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.
- ^{viii} For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- ^{ix} For more information on the Family Independence Temporary Assistance Program, see <http://www.dcss.louisiana.gov/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&nid=163&pnid=158&pid=139>.
- ^x For more information on the STEP program, see <http://www.dss.state.la.us/index.cfm?md=pagebuilder&tmp=home&pid=92>.