



## NRFC State Profile: Massachusetts

### 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
<b>Bay State Community Services, Inc.</b>	Domestic Violence	<p>Bay State Community Services’ state-funded <i>Project SAFE</i> offers three intervention/prevention services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <i>Domestic Abuse Intervention/Batterer Program</i>, a 40-week program for perpetrators of domestic violence and consists of examining abusive behavior and developing the use of healthy methods to deal with conflict.</li> <li>2) The <i>Generalized Violence/Anger Management Intervention Program</i>, a 15-week program for youth and adults that helps participants identify triggers to violence, develop coping skills, and use alternative outlets in the place of violence.</li> <li>3) The <i>Adolescent Dating Violence/Other Teen Violence Intervention</i>, a 15-week program for adolescents involved in violence toward women, especially dating violence and violence towards parents or guardians.</li> </ol>	<p>Serves Quincy and Norwood.</p> <p><a href="#">Website</a></p> <p>Quincy: (617) 471-8400 ext. 129</p> <p>Norwood: (781) 762-0060 ext. 10 or 11</p>

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Toll-free: 877-4DAD411 (877-432-3411) | Fax: 703-934-3740 | [info@fatherhood.gov](mailto:info@fatherhood.gov) | [www.fatherhood.gov](http://www.fatherhood.gov)

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<b>Boston Public Health Commission</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	Offered through the Boston Public Health Commission, the <i>Father Friendly Initiative</i> (FFI) provides services for low-income fathers in the Boston area to help them become more responsible members of their families and community. FFI targets men who have child support, custody/visitation, or court-related problems. Services include parenting classes, medical insurance, substance abuse referrals, anger management counseling, support groups, employment and education preparation, and custody and visitation counseling.	Serves Boston.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (617) 534-5395
<b>Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc.</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc. is a state-funded organization that offers services for parents. Their programs include the <i>Parent Child Home</i> program, which focuses on early literacy and school readiness, and the <i>Parenting Program Partnership</i> , which is a home-visiting program designed to help parents meet their goals, find work, and improve budgeting skills. Parent education and home visits are also offered to first-time parents under the age of 20 through the <i>Healthy Families</i> program.	Serves Berkshire County.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (413) 663-6593
<b>Children’s Study Home</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships	Children’s Study Home is a state-funded organization that offers <i>Fathers in Trust</i> , a program that helps fathers develop parenting and healthy relationship skills to increase positive outcomes in their families.	Serves Springfield, Falmouth, and Hyannis.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (413) 739-5626
<b>Family Nurturing Center of Massachusetts</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships	The <i>Nurturing Fathers’ Program</i> is offered through the state-funded Family Nurturing Center. It helps fathers (custodial, non-custodial, step-fathers, and new fathers) with understanding how to be nurturing and supportive. Emphasis is also placed on maintaining a positive and supportive co-parenting relationship with the child(ren)’s mother, whether the parents are together or separated.	Serves the entire state.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (617) 474-1143

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<b>Family Services of the Merrimack Valley</b>	Healthy Relationships Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	Family Services was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. The <i>Strengthening Couples Program</i> will provide relationships, parenting and economic stability services for low-income Latino couples. The organization also provides the <i>Siempre Papa</i> program for fathers.	Greater Lawrence area  <a href="#">Website</a>  (978) 327-6600
<b>Hallmark Health System, Inc.</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting	Hallmark Health System, Inc. is a state-funded organization that provides the <i>Healthy Families</i> home visiting program for first-time parents under 21 years old who have an infant (under 1 year old). The program offers prenatal and parenting coaching, child development information and activities, and connections to community resources.	Serves 8 towns north of Boston.  <a href="#">Website</a>  Main office: (781) 979-3000
<b>Hilltown Community Health Center</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting	Hilltown Community Health Center is a state- and federal funded organization that offers multiple programs for families. Their <i>Reach Out and Read</i> program educates parents on the importance of reading aloud to their children. Additional programs include parent-child playgroups, child birth education, and home visits.	Serves the rural Hilltown communities of Western Massachusetts.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (413) 667-2203 ext. 3
<b>Job Corps</b>	Economic Stability	<i>Job Corps</i> is a federally funded nationwide job training program to help low-income men and women ages 16 to 24 with educational and career goals.	Job Corps centers are located in North Grafton, Devens, and Chicopee.  <a href="#">Website</a> Grafton: (508) 887-7300 Devens (Shriver): (978) 784-2600 Chicopee (Westover): (413) 593-4000
<b>LUK, Inc.</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	LUK is a state- and federally funded organization that offers services for youth and young adults ages 13-to-25 who are pregnant and/or parenting. Their <i>Young Parent Support</i> services include access to parenting resources, employment search assistance, job skills training, and case management.	Serves Worcester, Webster, Fitchburg, and Lowell.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (800) 579-0000

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<b>Massachusetts' Department of Labor and Workforce Development</b>	Economic Stability	Massachusetts' Department of Labor and Workforce Development operates the <i>One-Stop Career Centers</i> program, which provide employment services and training to low-income and unemployed individuals.	Serves the entire state.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (617) 626-5300
<b>Massachusetts' Executive Office of Public Safety and Security</b>	Reentry Economic Stability	Massachusetts' Executive Office of Public Safety and Security offers a state-funded program for ex-offenders released from correctional facilities. Services include assistance with job search and job skills, vocational training, education, housing searches, and mental health and substance abuse services.	Serves those reentering from correctional facilities throughout the state.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (508) 650-4559
<b>Medford Family Network (MFN) of the Medford Public Schools</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting	MFN of the Medford Public Schools provides family support and parenting education that is available to every child and caregiver who lives or works in Medford with at least one child through age seven. The network offers parenting education programs, a support group for fathers, and a babysitting exchange program.	Serves Medford.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (781) 393-2106
<b>Pernet Family Health Service</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Incarceration/Reentry	Pernet Family Health Service offers a number of state-funded Family Support Services, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) <i>Fathers and Family</i> Program, which provides parenting and support groups for fathers in the community plus services for incarcerated fathers at the Worcester County House of Correction.</li><li>2) The <i>Young Parent Support</i> Program, which helps young parents by teaching parenting and time management skills, and ways to establish a network of support.</li><li>3) <i>Parent Aides</i> Program, a home visiting program providing assistance with parenting skills, household management, and community resources. Parents may request a Pernet Parent Aide through their Department of Children and Families worker.</li></ol>	Serves Worcester county.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (508) 755-1228

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
The United Arc of Franklin and Hampshire Counties	Fatherhood/Parenting	The United Arc of Franklin and Hampshire Counties is a state-funded organization that provides services for families headed by parents with cognitive challenges, intellectual limitations, or learning disabilities. The organization’s Positive Parenting Resource Center offers parenting skills training, home-based parent education, and parent education groups. The groups use <i>The Nurturing Parent</i> and <i>The Family Game</i> curricula.	Serves Franklin and Hampshire counties.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (413) 774-5558 ext. 1054
Valuing our Children	Fatherhood/Parenting	Valuing our Children offers the state-funded <i>Nurturing Father’s Program</i> , which is a program for fathers to reflect on their parenting style and learn new techniques. Topics include roots of parenting, communication, play, fathering sons/fathering daughters, and self-nurturing skills. Valuing our Children also offers other parenting services for families involved with the foster care system.	Serves the 9 North Quabbin towns.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (978) 249-8467

## 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.

**In Massachusetts, if the parents of a child are not married at the time of the child’s birth, the parents must establish paternity before a father’s name is put on the child’s birth certificate. Paternity can be established by either signing a voluntary acknowledgement or by getting a court order. If both parents agree on paternity, they may sign a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Parentage at the hospital where the child is born, at the town or city hall clerk’s office, or at the Registry of Vital Records and Statistics in Boston. If the parents do not agree on paternity, either person may apply for services from the Department of Revenue (DOR), after which the DOR arranges for genetic marker paternity testing before asking the court to establish paternity.<sup>1</sup>**

### 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 Massachusetts, the Family and Probate Court can decide who will have physical or legal custody over the child or children after a divorce if the parents cannot mutually decide. The courts may decide to change the custody of a child if it is in the best interest of the child. For unmarried parents, the mother has automatic physical and legal custody over the child unless the Family and Probate Court orders otherwise.<sup>ii</sup>**

### 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.<sup>iii</sup>

**Massachusetts' Child Support Enforcement [website](#) has resources on how to make payments, apply for services, and find court information. The phone number is (800) 332-2733.<sup>iv</sup>**

### 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.<sup>v</sup>

**The Small Necessities Leave Act in Massachusetts requires that employers grant private sector employees up to 24 hours over a 12 month period to participate in school activities related to the employee's child, to take the employee's child to medical or dental appointments, or to take an elderly relative to medical or dental appointments.<sup>vi</sup>**

### 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 Massachusetts, go to: <http://www.massheadstart.org/>.**

## 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.<sup>vii</sup>

**Through the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), eligible Massachusetts families can receive financial assistance to pay for child care at early education programs or out of school time programs. Families must meet income and employment requirements.<sup>viii</sup>**

### 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.<sup>ix</sup>

**Massachusetts has several programs to help with rental assistance. The Alternative Housing Voucher Program provides rental vouchers for disabled applicants under the age of 60. If accepted into the program, tenants pay 25 or 30 percent of their income to the landlord (depending on whether utilities are included), and the Massachusetts Housing Authority will pay the remainder.**

**The HomeBASE Household Assistance Program provides an alternative to living in a shelter by providing up to \$4,000 in Household Assistance to families who are eligible for the state's Emergency Assistance Program. Families are eligible for the Emergency Assistance Program if they are homeless or imminently at risk of becoming homeless. Eligibility is ultimately decided by a Department of Housing and Community Development Homeless Coordinator. Families have 32 weeks after being placed in an emergency shelter to access HomeBASE Household Assistance.**

**The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program provides tenant-based and project-based rental vouchers for low-income families or individuals. Tenant-based vouchers, which are known as Mobile vouchers, are valid for any housing unit that meets standards of the state sanitary code. Tenants pay an amount determined by the tenant's income, household size, and geography. The tenant pays the difference between the voucher and what the landlord charges for rent. Project-based vouchers are assigned to specific housing units or developments. Participants either pay 35 or 40 percent of their adjusted gross income depending on whether heat is included in the utilities. For both tenant-based and project-based vouchers, participants cannot have a household income above 50% of the area's median income.<sup>x</sup>**

### 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.<sup>xi</sup>

### 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 Massachusetts, Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) is operated under the TANF block grant. As part of TAFDC, participants may be required to perform a work-related activity in order to receive benefits. Massachusetts' Department of Transition Services (DTA) provides job assistance for TAFDC participants, including job training, job placement, and other key services such as GED assistance and work readiness and skills training.<sup>xii</sup>**

There are various employment training and education programs offered for TAFDC clients through the Employment Services Program. For former non-English and non-Spanish speaking refugees or immigrants who receive TAFDC, the Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) provides assessment, employment readiness, and job placement services in the participant's native language. Under the larger umbrella of the Employment Services Program, the Employment Training and Education programs are short-term (4-12 weeks) classes and trainings targeted towards clients with minimal barriers to employment. Services include job assessment, job readiness training, job search skills training, educational activities, and/or job placement. TAFDC clients can also work towards obtaining their High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) through the Employment Services Program. Lastly, the Employment Supports Program is designed to serve TAFDC clients who have considerable barriers to employment. Clients are placed in highly supportive work sites where they earn wages and receive a reduced TAFDC grant. After the program is completed, clients are placed in unsubsidized jobs.

The Young Parents Program is designed to serve pregnant and/or parenting TAFDC clients between ages 14 and 21 who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Services include assessment, adult basic education, HiSET, life and parenting skills, counseling, prevocational activities, job development, job placement, and follow-up services. In addition to education and employment services, the DTA offers support services for TAFDC clients, specifically transportation services and child care. For more information, visit this [website](#).

## Other Helpful Resources

### OneToughJob.org

Created by Children's Trust, OneToughJob.org connects parents in Massachusetts and provides up-to-date parenting information and resources. Find tips and resources on the [website](#).

### Family Planning Program

The Massachusetts' Department of Public Health offers a variety of health education resources and materials related to family planning, as well as locations of family planning centers throughout the state. For more information on family planning services, visit the [website](#).

## References

- <sup>i</sup> For more information on Massachusetts' paternity establishment laws, see <http://www.mass.gov/dor/child-support/court-information/paternity-establishment/>.
- <sup>ii</sup> For more information on Massachusetts' child custody laws, see <http://www.mass.gov/courts/case-legal-res/lib/laws-by-subj/about/custody.html>.
- <sup>iii</sup> For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css).
- <sup>iv</sup> For more information on Massachusetts' child support enforcement laws, see <http://www.mass.gov/dor/child-support/>
- <sup>v</sup> For more information on the Family and Medical Leave Act, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.pdf>.
- <sup>vi</sup> For more information about Massachusetts' Family and Medical Leave Act policies, see <http://www.mass.gov/anf/employment-equal-access-disability/hr-policies/leave-program/fmla/>.
- <sup>vii</sup> For more information on the Child Care and Development Fund, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/about/what-we-do>.
- <sup>viii</sup> For more information on Massachusetts' child care assistance program, see <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/financial-assistance/financial-assistance-for-families/>.
- <sup>ix</sup> For more information on Rental Assistance, see [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental\\_assistance](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance).
- <sup>x</sup> For more information on Massachusetts' Rental Assistance programs, see <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/rental-assistance/>.
- <sup>xi</sup> For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- <sup>xii</sup> For more information on TANF policies in Massachusetts, see <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dta/cash-assistance.html>.