



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



NRFC State Profile: Delaware July 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
Domestic Violence Coordinating Council	Domestic Violence	The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council is a state-funded council that provides crisis hotlines, service referrals, housing assistance, education services, legal support and advocacy, counseling, and support groups for victims of domestic violence.	Serves the entire state. Website Wilmington: (302) 255-0406 Milford: (302) 424-7238
Ecumenical Council on Children and Families	Fatherhood/Parenting	The Ecumenical Council on Children and Families has a federally and state-funded program called <i>Parents Anonymous</i> , which provides a network of support groups for fathers and mothers who want to strengthen their families, improve their relationships with their children, and reduce the stress often associated with parenting.	Serves the city of Wilmington. Website (302) 225-3011
Sussex Correctional Institution	Incarceration/Reentry Fatherhood/Parenting	The Sussex Correctional Institution offers the <i>Youthful Criminal Offenders Program</i> . The program serves 16-to-18 year old males in Delaware's juvenile justice system. The program seeks to change behaviors through structured programming that includes substance	Serves youth in juvenile correction institutions in Delaware. Website

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
		abuse treatment and guidance on anger management, alternatives to violence, youth leadership, public speaking, and parenting.	(302) 856-5280

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.

Delaware has an in-hospital paternity acknowledgement program. When paternity is uncontested, parents can establish a child’s paternity either in the hospital or by submitting a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity form. When paternity is contested, parents must go through a judicial process in which the alleged father may have to participate in genetic testing. In Delaware, paternity may be established at any time before the child turns 18, or 19 if the child is still in high school.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 Delaware, upon a couple’s voluntary separation, either or both parents may petition the Family Court for custody of their children. When such a petition is filed in Delaware, both parents and children must take a parenting education class. Except in cases of domestic violence, parents are first referred to mediation in an attempt to establish a custody order. If mediation does not result in a satisfactory custody arrangement, the case is referred to a judge for a full hearing.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

Delaware’s Division of Child Support Enforcement is responsible for collection and distribution of child support payments and can modify orders when appropriate. For more information, visit the [website](#) for Delaware’s Division of Child Support or call (302) 577-7171.

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}

Delaware has no additional state provisions for paid or unpaid leave.

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 Delaware, go to: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/directories>.

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 Delaware, child care assistance is available for children from infancy through twelve years of age. Delaware's Department of Social Services determines eligibility based on the need for service and income. The income limit is currently set at 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). In 2015 for a family of 4, an income at 200 percent of the federal poverty guideline was \$48,500.^{vi} If a child is older than 12 and has a special need, the family may still be eligible to receive child care. Parents may choose child care providers from a state licensed child care center, state licensed child care family home, or a license-exempt provider (such as a preschool, school age program, relative, or other person) when a Child Care Certification Provider Agreement is obtained from a social services case manager.^{vii}

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.^{viii}

Delaware's Public Housing Program has apartment complexes that are owned and managed by the Housing Authority. Delaware also provides Housing Choice Vouchers (formally Section 8 vouchers), which allow families or individuals to choose where they live. For both the Public Housing Program and Housing Choice Vouchers, participants put no more than 30 to 35 percent of their monthly income toward rent and utilities, the rest of which the federal government subsidizes. Households whose gross incomes do not exceed 80 percent of the area median income qualify for both of these programs.^{ix}

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.^x

Delaware has no additional state provisions for SNAP benefits.

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.

TANF benefits have a lifetime limit of 36 months in Delaware. Parents in two-parent families receiving financial assistance must participate in work activities immediately upon receiving benefits, specifically working or participating in work related activities for at least 30 hours a week. Parents in single-parent families must begin participating in work activities 24 months after receiving benefits. Education and training can fulfill this work requirement.^{xi}

Delaware also has Delaware's General Assistance, which is a state-funded program designed to provide cash assistance to low-income people who do not qualify for federally funded programs, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Social Security benefits. A person may qualify if he or she is 18-to-54 and is too sick to work; has to stay home to take care of a sick household member; is 55 or older with no other income; or is a high school student over 18 and is expected to graduate within two years.^{xii}

Other Helpful Resources

Delaware Fatherhood and Family Coalition

This coalition of parents, community leaders, and service professionals provides tips for fathers and resources for programs. For more information see the coalition [website](#).

References

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- ⁱ For more information about Delaware's Paternity Establishment, see <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dcse/estpat.html>
- ⁱⁱ For more information about Delaware's Child Custody laws, see <http://courts.delaware.gov/help/custody/index.stm>
- 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 federal poverty guidelines, see http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/eceap/docs/2015_Federal_Poverty_Level_Chart.pdf
- ^{vii} For more information about Delaware's Child Care Assistance, see <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dss/childcr.html>
- ^{viii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance
- ^{ix} For more information about Delaware's Rental Assistance, see <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/delaware>
- ^x For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>
- ^{xi} For more information about Delaware's TANF policies, see <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dss/tanf.html>
- ^{xii} For more information about Delaware's General Assistance, see <http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dss/genast.html>