



NRFC State Profile: Georgia 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
Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) - Georgia Fatherhood Program	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability Reentry	The <i>Georgia Fatherhood Program</i> helps noncustodial parents overcome child support payment barriers by providing workshops and services to assist parents in achieving economic stability. DCSS and the <i>Fatherhood Program</i> work in partnership with the Georgia Department of Corrections to provide reentry services for fathers, including preparation for employment and reunification with family members. DCSS also provides Access and Visitation Centers to help noncustodial parents have parenting time with their children.	Serves the entire state. Website (844) MYGADHS (694-2347): - select option 1 for DCSS - then select 2 for Agent - then select 3 for Outreach. Location information for Access and Visitation Centers.
Future Foundation, Inc.	Healthy Relationships Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood Economic Stability	Future Foundation, Inc. is a federally funded organization offering several curricula for youth, both boys and girls, including education on dating/relationships and pregnancy prevention, as well as career preparation.	Serves greater Atlanta. Website (404) 766-0510

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence	Domestic Violence	Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a federally funded organization that offers services and programs to prevent domestic violence and provide help to victims of domestic violence.	Serves the entire state. Website (404) 209-0280 24 hour hotline: (800) 33-HAVEN (334-2836)
Georgia Department of Labor Career Centers	Economic Stability	The Georgia Department of Labor provides a statewide network of career centers. The centers provide comprehensive no-cost employment services, including career resources, counseling, training, and résumé development.	Serves the entire state. Website (404) 232-3990
HEARTS for Families	Fatherhood/Parenting Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood	HEARTS for Families is a state-funded organization that provides family-based parenting education throughout the state. It offers multiple curricula, many of which are focused on preventing child abuse and neglect. They also offer programs focused on preventing unwanted/early fatherhood.	Services are provided throughout the state. Website (770) 972-3664
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.	Job Corps centers are located in Atlanta, Brunswick, and Albany. Website Atlanta: (404) 794-9512 Brunswick: (912) 264-8843 Albany: (229) 883-8500
More than Conquerors, Inc.	Healthy Relationships Domestic Violence Economic Stability	More than Conquerors, Inc. is a federally funded organization that provides skills-based healthy marriage and relationship education, domestic violence prevention training, and job and career advancement training to adolescents, primarily African American high school students.	Serves greater Atlanta Website (770) 483-3299

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
University of Georgia	Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	The University of Georgia was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. Working in partnership with Georgia Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), the university will provide healthy relationship and economic stability services for parents in twelve counties.	<i>Specific service area and contact info not yet available</i>
Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stop Centers	Economic Stability	More than 45 state-funded WIA One-Stop Centers throughout Georgia offer vocational training, education, job readiness, job search, mentoring, and support services. Many other employment-related services are provided by partner agencies or through referrals from the One-Stop Center.	Services are provided throughout the state. More Information (404) 962-4005 Map with contact info for each center

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.

Georgia has an in-hospital paternity acknowledgement program. When paternity is uncontested, parents can establish a child's paternity either in the hospital or by signing a Voluntary Paternity Acknowledgment form. When paternity is contested, parents must go through a judicial process in which the alleged father may need genetic testing. Currently the cost of genetic testing in Georgia is \$29.65 per person.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 Georgia, when married couples with children divorce, both parents have the right to petition any circuit court to determine the custody of their children. Custody decisions are made in the best interest of the children, which includes factors such as the age of the children and each parent's ability to care for the children.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

Georgia operates its child support program through its Department of Human Services Division of Child Support Services (DCSS). The DCSS helps parents file a support order and receive payment after orders have been set.^{iv} Noncustodial fathers who are unable to pay their child support awards are eligible to participate in Georgia's Fatherhood Program, created by DCSS.^v The website for the Division of Child Support Services provides information on child support eligibility, modifications, and enforcement. The website is <http://dcss.dhs.georgia.gov/> and the phone number is (844) 694-2347.

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.^{vi}

Georgia 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 Georgia, go to: <http://www.georgiaheadstart.org/programs/>.

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.^{vii}

In Georgia the Department of Family and Children Services provides Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS), which helps low income families afford quality child care through subsidies. To qualify, the following qualifications must be met: 1) each parent in the household must be employed and/or attending technical or vocation school at least 24 hours per week, or if under age 21, attending middle school, high school, or GED courses full time; 2) families must meet the income requirements based on family size; and 3) children must be below age 13 (19 for a child with special needs). Families that qualify for the CAPS program can choose their own child care provider. The CAPS program will reimburse authorized child care providers up to a certain amount. Most eligible families share in the cost of care by paying a fee based on their income, family size, and the number of children receiving child care subsidies. This fee is paid directly to the child care provider.^{viii}

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.^{ix}

In Georgia, a resident's income must be below 50 percent of the area median income for the family size to qualify. Waiting lists are maintained for each county.^x

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

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.^{xi}

In Georgia, individuals can apply for SNAP by completing a state application form. This form can be done online, mailed, faxed, or dropped off at the Department of Family and Children Services. Once the form is complete, someone from each household will be interviewed to complete the application process.^{xii}



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 Georgia, TANF has a lifetime limit of 48 months. Parents receiving financial assistance must work at least 30 hours per week, though training and education may fulfill this requirement for some parents. Paternity must be established for each child at the time of application or when a child is added to an active case.^{xiii}

References

- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in Georgia, see <http://ocss.dhs.georgia.gov/paternity-establishment>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information about Georgia's Child Custody policy, see <http://georgia.gov/popular-topic/learning-about-child-custody>.
- 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 Child Support process in Georgia, see <http://dcss.dhs.georgia.gov/child-support-process>.
- ^v For more information on the Georgia Fatherhood Program, see <http://dcss.dhs.georgia.gov/fatherhood-program>.
- ^{vi} For more information on the Family and Medical Leave Act, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.pdf>
- ^{vii} For more information on the Child Care and Development Fund, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/about/what-we-do>.
- ^{viii} For more information on the Childcare and Parent Services program, see <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/subsidized-child-care-assistance>.
- ^{ix} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance
- ^x For more information on Georgia's voucher program, see http://www.dca.state.ga.us/housing/RentalAssistance/programs/hcvc_program.asp.
- ^{xi} For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- ^{xii} For more information on SNAP in Georgia, see <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/food-stamps>.
- ^{xiii} For more information on TANF eligibility requirements in Georgia, see <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/tanf-eligibility-requirements>. For more information on applying for TANF in Georgia, see <http://dfcs.dhs.georgia.gov/how-apply-tanf>.