



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



NRFC State Profile: Illinois 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 Home and Aid	Fatherhood/Parenting	Children's Home and Aid's <i>Parents Care and Share</i> program works to strengthen the parent-child relationship, promote positive parenting, and encourage healthy child growth and development. The state-funded program provides general support groups for all parents and specific peer support groups for fathers, teen parents, adoptive parents, and parents of autistic children. The organization provides a range of other services that include home visiting programs and a family visitation center in McLean County for supervised visits and exchanges between noncustodial parents and their children.	Serves the entire state. Services vary from county to county. Website (312) 424-0200
Haymarket Center	Substance Abuse Economic Stability	The Haymarket Center provides several federally funded programs for low-income fathers who are recovering from alcohol or drug addiction, including the <i>Recovery Works Program</i> , which helps fathers find employment.	Chicago metropolitan area. Website (312) 226-7984

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Abuse	Domestic Violence	The state-funded Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Abuse maintains a list of resources for victims of domestic violence. The Coalition also provides contact information for agencies that are approved by the Illinois Department of Human Services to provide intervention services for perpetrators.	Serves the entire state. (217) 789-2830 Website for victim services Website for perpetrator services
Illinois State University		The Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Illinois State University was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. <i>The Champaign Area Relationship Education for Youth (CARE4U)</i> program will offer relationship education, job readiness, and financial management to enhance the well-being of at-risk youth (ages 15-24).	Champaign County. <i>Contact information not yet available</i>
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 Golconda, Joilet, and Chicago. Website Golconda: (618) 285-6601 Joilet: (815) 727-7677 Chicago: (773) 847-9820
Family Bridges	Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	Family Bridges' federally funded <i>Deep Roots, Long Branches (DRLB)</i> program provides healthy marriage and relationship education services plus job and career advancement supports to increase participants' employability skills and ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency.	Chicago metropolitan area. Website (877) 412-7434
Salvation Army Family and Community Services	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	Salvation Army Family and Community Services was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. Working with partner agencies, the organization will work with	Chicago metropolitan area Website

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
		fathers to address employment needs, healthy relationship skill building, and parenting education through the <i>Fatherhood University</i> program.	<i>Additional contact information will be added when available.</i>
SGA Youth and Family Services	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	SGA Youth and Family Services offers various state and federally funded services for youth and young parents, including <i>Construction Opportunities for Reaching Employment (CORE)</i> and <i>Early Advantage Teen Parenting Support</i> . The organization also provides Head Start and Healthy Start programs.	Chicago metropolitan area. Website (312) 663-0305
Springfield Urban League	Economic Stability	Springfield Urban League provides workforce and economic development programs for low-income individuals along with Head Start and AmeriCorps programs.	Sangamon, Macon, and Morgan counties. Website (217) 789-0830

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 Illinois, both parents can sign a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity form and have it witnessed, which can be filled out at the hospital where the child is born. If the parents do not sign a Voluntary Acknowledgement of Paternity, an Administrative Paternity Order can be entered by the State of Illinois’ Department of Healthcare and Family Services’ Child Support Services or a Paternity Order may be entered in court by a judge.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 Illinois, divorced parents can gain child custody by filing a petition for child custody and a child custody affidavit. A summons will be sent to the other parent to answer the petition or file an appearance in court within 30 days of receiving the summons. When the other parent replies, both parents will have a court hearing or settle the case by entering an agreed order. If the parents cannot agree on an order, then the case must go to trial and the Illinois courts will decide who is granted custody.

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.ⁱⁱ

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Division of Child Support Services has Noncustodial Parent Services Units (NCPSUs) in Cook, Peoria, Winnebago, Champaign, Kane, Lake, and St. Clair counties to help noncustodial parents with child support payments. NPCSU provides employer referral services to help noncustodial parents who are unable to pay child support due to unemployment and have children who receive TANF.

Illinois also offers the Clean Slate Program through the Healthcare and Family Services, Division of Child Support Services. The program allows for the permanent removal of past due child support debt owed to the State of Illinois in exchange for regular ordered payments after completing the program. To qualify, participants have to prove they were unemployed, incarcerated, or were seriously ill during the assistance period. The participant must make regular child support payments for six months, after which point the child support debt owed to the State of Illinois will be permanently removed.ⁱⁱⁱ The Illinois Child Support website provides resources for custodial and noncustodial parents, as well as information on requesting, changing, and reviewing child support orders. Visit the [website](#) or call (800) 447-4278 for more information.

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}

Illinois has additional leave policies for the military through the Military Family Leave law. This law requires that employers allow employees to take time off to spend time with a spouse or child while that person's federal or state deployment orders are in effect. Employers with at least 50 employees must provide up to 30 days of unpaid leave, while smaller employers must provide up to 15 days.

In addition, Illinois has a Domestic Violence Leave law that requires employers of at least 50 employees to allow eligible employees who are victims of domestic or sexual violence, or who have a family or household member who is a victim of domestic or sexual violence, to take up to 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month period to seek medical treatment; obtain services from victim services organizations; receive counseling; engage in safety planning or relocation; and seek legal assistance.

Lastly, Illinois has a Small Necessities Law that requires employers of at least 50 employees to allow eligible employees up to eight hours of unpaid leave per school year, with no more than four hours taken in one day, to attend school conferences or classroom activities relating to their children if they cannot be rescheduled after work hours.

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 Illinois, go to: <http://ilheadstart.org/find-a-head-start-program/>.

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

Illinois' Department of Human Services' Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) provides low-income, working families with access to high quality and affordable child care. This program is offered to the following groups: families who are receiving TANF and participating in educational or training programs according to their responsibility and service plans; teen parents seeking a high school degree or equivalent; and/or families who are not receiving TANF, but are pursuing additional education to improve their job opportunities.^{vi}

Homeless Prevention Program

Illinois' Homeless Prevention Programs provides rental assistance, utility assistance, and supportive services directly related to the prevention of homelessness to eligible individuals and families who are in danger of eviction, foreclosure, or homelessness or are currently homeless. The program is designed to stabilize individuals and families in their existing homes, shorten the amount of time that individuals and families stay in shelters, and assist individuals and families with securing affordable housing. Eligible households must document a temporary economic crisis beyond their control and must be able to demonstrate an ability to meet the prospective rental/utility obligations after the assistance has been granted based on current or anticipated income.^{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}

Illinois has no additional state provisions for rental assistance.

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.^{ix}

Illinois residents who receive SNAP benefits can also receive case management (EarnFare) to improve their work skills, find unsubsidized employment, earn cash assistance, and become self-sufficient. Participants can receive education, job skills training, pre-employment services, job placement services, and job retention services. Services may include basic skills enhancement, access and enrollment in GED or computer literacy classes, short-term technical training, job training, job readiness assessments, mentoring, and referrals to community organizations.^x Participants work off the value of their SNAP benefits at minimum wage, and have the opportunity to work additional hours to earn up to \$294 a month.

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 Illinois, those who qualify for TANF must be Illinois residents and have a dependent child under age 19 who lives with them. TANF recipients can have dependent children 18 years or older if they are full-time high school students. A pregnant woman and her husband (if they live together) can qualify for help if they do not have other children. To qualify for Illinois TANF, recipients must develop a self-sufficiency plan. Illinois TANF benefits include cash assistance for basic needs, such as food, clothing, and housing. Recipients can also take advantage of transitional services, such as GED preparation classes, vocational training, postsecondary education, English classes, child care subsidies, and job retention services. TANF recipients can also receive Healthcare and Family Services' Medical Assistance and SNAP.^{xi}

TANF recipients who have been unsuccessful in other employment and training programs, and who face multiple barriers to obtaining and retaining employment, can utilize the Job Placement/Work First program. Participants are assigned to specific work and training activities to earn their TANF assistance check while they gain valuable employment skills. Activities include assignment to a worksite, community service, education, job skills training, job readiness, and job retention services. The program includes supportive services, such as child care, transportation, and clothing expenses.^{xii}

Unemployed, noncustodial parents who cannot financially support their children and whose children are receiving TANF may be court ordered to enroll in EarnFare. The Noncustodial Parent EarnFare (NCP EarnFare) program assigns the participant to a position where he or she works at the state or federal minimum wage to provide a \$50 child support payment to the custodial parent. Participants in this program can work additional hours and earn up to \$244 a month.^{xiii}

Other Helpful Resources

Illinois Council on Responsible Fatherhood

Illinois' state commission was established by the Illinois State Legislature to promote the positive involvement of both parents in the lives of their children. Information about the council, including links to related organizations, support groups, and resources, are available at: <http://responsiblefatherhood.com/>.

Illinois Department of Human Services

Illinois Department of Human Services' Bureau of Early Childhood Development provides funding for various community-based prevention and intervention programs, including the *Developmental Child Education* program and the *Parents Too Soon* programs. More information about the range of programs can be found at this [website](#). More information about *Parents Too Soon* can be found at this [website](#). For more information about programs offered through the Illinois Department of Human Services, call (800) 843-6154 for the Chicago office or (800) 843-6154 for the Springfield office.

References

- ⁱ For more information on Illinois' Paternity Establishment laws, see <http://www.idph.state.il.us/vitalrecords/births/Pages/paternity.htm>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on Illinois's Child Support Enforcement, see <http://www.childsupportillinois.com/>.
- ^{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 about Illinois' Child Care Assistance, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30355>.
- ^{vii} For more information about Illinois' Homeless Prevention Program, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30360>.
- ^{viii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.
- ^{ix} For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- ^x For more information about Illinois' SNAP Employment and Training Job Placement, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31773>.
- ^{xi} For more information on TANF services in Illinois, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=30358>.
- ^{xii} For more information on Illinois' TANF Job Placement Program, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31774>. For more information on Cook County's TANF Work First Program, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31775>.
- ^{xiii} For more information about Illinois' EarnFare program, see <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31772>.