



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



NRFC State Profile: Minnesota October 2016

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 2016) 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
Day One	Domestic Violence	Day One is a state funded network of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and community-advocacy programs. Day One hosts a crisis hotline that connects callers to their nearest service or agency. The website provides healthy relationships information plus helpful information for victims (both men and women), such as what to expect when calling a crisis line or going to a shelter, and how to develop a safety plan.	Serves the entire state. Website Day One Crisis Hotline Number: (866) 223-1111
Department of Family Science at the University of Minnesota	Healthy Relationships	The University of Minnesota’s Couples on the Brink project offers “discernment counseling” for couples at risk of divorce. Discernment counseling does not assume that a couple wants to preserve a marriage, only that both individuals are willing to take a look at what has happened in the marriage and decide whether to break up or try to repair it. The program serves couples who consider themselves married, including same-sex and cohabiting partners.	Serves residents of Minnesota and western Wisconsin. Website (612) 625-4752 x2

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Goodwill-Easter Seals	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability Healthy Relationships	The <i>FATHER Project</i> at Goodwill-Easter Seals offers father and family activities, parenting support, employment services, child support services, and case management services. Funding comes from a mix of state, local and other sources.	Minneapolis/St. Paul, Park Rapids, Rochester, and St. Cloud. Website (651) 379-5800
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.	Minnesota’s Job Corps center is located in St. Paul. Website (651) 642-1133
Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development	Economic Stability	The state- and federally funded Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development runs several Workforce Centers throughout Minnesota that offer job-search assistance, job readiness workshops, training, and other services.	50 centers are offered statewide. Find a center by zip code Complete list of workforce centers
Soar Career Solutions	Economic Stability Incarceration/Reentry	Soar Career Solutions is a state- and federally funded organization providing affordable career services for men and women. The organization offers the <i>Career Quest</i> workshop to identify employment goals, <i>Mind Over Matters</i> to help clients realize their potential, and free job skills training classes that include truck driving, welding, and basic carpentry. Soar also offers a community offender reentry program in which case managers work one-on-one with reentering men and women to assist them with problems such as employment services, housing, and transportation. Assistance is provided both during incarceration and after release.	Duluth and surrounding area. Career services website (218) 722-3126 Reentry services website (218) 722-3126

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 Minnesota, a father can become the legal father of a child if he is not married to the mother by signing a Voluntary Recognition of Parentage form and filing it with the Minnesota Department of Health.ⁱ The mother, alleged father, or court may order genetic testing to determine whether the alleged father is the biological father of the child. If the mother or alleged father requests the court to order genetic testing, they must file an Affidavit listing detailed facts to show there is a reasonable possibility that the alleged father is the father.ⁱⁱ

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.

Except in emergency situations, a child must have lived in Minnesota with a parent (or person acting as a parent) for at least six consecutive months before a court process for custody can begin.ⁱⁱⁱ Custody in Minnesota is determined by the best interest of the child.^{iv}

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 the 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.^v

Minnesota operates its child support program through the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Their [website](#) provides information about paying and receiving child support and a list of local child support offices by county. The phone number is (651) 431-4400.

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 12 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}

Minnesota has extended family and medical leave laws to apply to smaller employers, who are not covered by the FMLA. Employees are entitled to twelve weeks of paid or unpaid leave if their employer has 21 or more employees and if they have worked at least half-time for the same employer for twelve consecutive months.^{vii}

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 Minnesota, go to: <http://www.mnheadstart.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.^{viii}

In Minnesota, families are eligible for Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) if they 1) are participating in the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) or Diversionary Work Program (DWP); 2) closed an MFIP or DWP case within the last 12 months; or 3) are low-income. Families in CCAP have a copayment based on their gross income and family size. CCAP pays child care costs for children age 12 and younger and children with special needs up to age 14. Most families participating in MFIP have a child care copayment of \$0. Care must be provided by a legal child care provider over the age of 18.^{ix}

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.^x

Minnesota also offers the Housing Trust Fund Rental Assistance program for families and individuals in need of rental assistance. The program provides assistance through local rental assistance administrators.^{xi}

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 many states, individuals over the age of 18 and under the age of 50 are limited to three months of SNAP benefits every three years unless they are working or in a work

or training program 20 hours a week. Some states have waivers to this rule for all or part of the state – for detailed state eligibility requirements, consult the [state SNAP agency](#).

In Minnesota, applicants for SNAP can submit applications online or mail a completed form to the closest county office.^{xii}

The Minnesota Food Assistance Program (MFAP) provides the same benefits as SNAP to legal noncitizens age 50 or older who do not qualify for SNAP assistance because of their citizenship status.^{xiii}

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.

The Minnesota Family Investment Program is the state’s version of TANF, and families with children under 18 can apply for benefits. The four month long program helps families move to financial stability by providing cash and food assistance. When most families apply for cash assistance, they will participate in the Diversionary Work Program to help families go straight to work rather than become dependent on government assistance. Eligibility is determined by several factors, including household size, earned and unearned income, and assets. In some cases, called child-only cases, children can receive MFIP on their own whether they live with their parent or not.^{xiv} For more information about the Diversionary Work Program go to this [website](#) or call (651) 431-4000.

Other Helpful Resources

Minnesota Fathers & Families Network

The Minnesota Fathers & Families Network is a state-funded nonprofit organization that provides information on resources that support responsible fatherhood programs in the state. The list of resources is available [here](#).

Supervised Visitation Directory

A number of organizations in Minnesota provide supervised visitation support, often for a fee. Additional information on these services is available [here](#).

References

- ⁱ For Minnesota's Voluntary Recognition of Parentage form, see <http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/services/child-support/resources/forms.jsp>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on Establishing Paternity in Minnesota, see <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Paternity.aspx>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For more information about Minnesota's custody policy, see <http://www.mncourts.gov/Help-Topics/Child-Custody.aspx>.
- ^{iv} For a full list of factor taken into account when determining custody, see <https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=518.17>.
- ^v For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css.
- ^{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 Family and Medical Leave Act in Minnesota, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/state/fmla/mn.htm> and <http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/ParLeave.asp>.
- ^{viii} For more information on the Child Care and Development Fund, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/about/what-we-do>.
- ^{ix} For more information on Minnesota's Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), see http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=id_008688.
- ^x For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.
- ^{xi} For more information on Minnesota's Housing Trust Fund Rental Assistance program, see <http://www.mnhousing.gov/wcs/Satellite?c=Page&cid=1403290283149&pagename=External%2FPage%2FEXTStandardLayout>.
- ^{xii} For more information about SNAP assistance in Minnesota, see <http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/economic-assistance/food-nutrition/programs-and-services/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program.jsp>.
- ^{xiii} For more information on the Minnesota Food Assistance Program (MFAP), see <http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/economic-assistance/food-nutrition/programs-and-services/minnesota-food-assistance-program.jsp>.
- ^{xiv} For more information on the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP), see <http://mn.gov/dhs/people-we-serve/children-and-families/economic-assistance/income/programs-and-services/>.