



NRFC State Profile: Mississippi June 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
Job Corps	Economic Stability	Job Corps is a federal job training program to help low-income young men and women ages 16 to 24 with educational and career goals.	Job Corps are located in Batesville, Gulfport, and Crystal Springs. Website with locations.
Mississippi Department of Employment Security, Workforce Investment Network (WIN)	Economic Stability	Workforce Investment Network (WIN) is a state funded regional network of one-stop employment and training centers. Centers provide job placement assistance, job and skill training, priority services for veterans, career counseling, and referrals to other services. The WIN website also offers job search and unemployment resources, including a search tool of open job positions in Mississippi.	There are 84 WIN Job Centers in Mississippi. Website with locations.

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

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



[facebook.com/fatherhoodgov](https://www.facebook.com/fatherhoodgov)



[@fatherhoodgov](https://twitter.com/fatherhoodgov)

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District Department of Family Centered Programs	Fatherhood/Parenting	The Starkville Oktibbeha School District’s Department of Family Centered Programs hosts <i>Parent Cafes</i> , which are parent-led community groups for parents to find support and discuss matters that are important to them. <i>Parent Cafes</i> help strengthen families by building the following protective factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental Resilience. • Social Connections. • Concrete Support in Times of Need. • Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development. • Social and Emotional Competence of Children. 	Starkville Oktibbeha School District. Website (662) 615-0033
The Center for Violence Prevention	Domestic Violence	The Center for Violence Prevention receives state and federal funding and offers a 24-hour crisis and referral line, temporary shelter, counseling, and domestic violence workshops for organizations and communities. The center also runs a 24-week <i>Batterer’s Intervention Program</i> for court-ordered offenders to change existing sexist beliefs and attitudes and teach alternatives to coercive, controlling, and abusive behavior in intimate relationships.	Serves 10 counties in Mississippi. Website Crisis line: (800) 266-4198 Main office number: (601) 932-4198

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 Mississippi, unmarried parents can establish paternity through “A Simple Acknowledgement of Paternity” (ASAP), Mississippi’s voluntary paternity establishment program. Establishing paternity allows the father’s name to be added to the birth certificate. There are three ways parents can establish paternity. 1) Both parents sign an acknowledgement of paternity at the hospital; 2) Parents can contact the Division of Field Operations at the Mississippi Department of Human Services to establish paternity upon leaving the hospital; 3) If the alleged father does not voluntarily establish his paternity, the mother can file a petition to establish paternity with the appropriate court with jurisdiction over the matter. There is a \$25 fee for this service unless the mother receives a state supported benefit such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or Medicaid.¹

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.

There are two types of child custody in Mississippi: legal and physical. Legal custody means that a parent has authority to make decisions about the child's health, education, and welfare. Physical custody means that parents have the right to have the child live with or be under their care. Parents can be awarded either joint or sole legal or physical custody. The noncustodial parent retains access to records and information pertaining to a minor child (including medical, dental, and school records), unless their rights to this access are terminated by adoption or a termination of parental rights proceeding. When determining custody, the court will take into account various factors, including the parents' age, their physical/mental health, their employment status, their respective capacity/willingness to provide primary child care, and the child's personal preference (if they are of a sufficient age to express a mature preference).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 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.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) administers Mississippi's Child Support Program. Parents can download an application online^{iv} and mail or hand deliver the application to their local Child Support Office, along with the \$25 application fee. MDHS has a Child Support Office in every county in Mississippi. Go to the [website](#) or call (877) 882-4916 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.^v

Mississippi 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 Mississippi, go to this [website](#).

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.^{vi}

In Mississippi, the Child Care Certificate Program provides parents with assistance for child care tuition. Parents may choose any type of child care while participating in this program. Parents who meet the income and work requirement for participation in the Certificate Program will be responsible for paying their child care provider a monthly co-pay. In order to be eligible for child care services, 1) a child must be under the age of 13 (or under age 19 and physically or mentally unable of caring for him or herself) and 2) the family's monthly income must be at or below the income requirement. Priority is given to referred clients, children or parents with special needs, parents deployed in the Mississippi National Guard or Reserve, and low-income parents at risk of going on TANF.^{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}

Mississippi 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 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](#).^x

Mississippi has no additional state provisions for SNAP.

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 Mississippi, TANF helps families achieve self-sufficiency through employment and training activities provided by the TANF Work Program (TWP) through supportive services such as assistance with child care and transportation expenses. TANF also assists with job readiness training, job skills training, vocational training, other educational training programs, and job search help.^{ix}

References

ⁱ For more information on paternity establishment in Mississippi, see <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/child-support/determine-paternity/>.

ⁱⁱ For more information on child custody in Mississippi, see http://www.divorcenet.com/states/mississippi/ms_art02.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css.

^{iv} To download Mississippi's child support application, see <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/media/309030/Child-Support-Application.pdf>.

^v For more information on the Family and Medical leave Act, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.pdf>.

^{vi} For more information on the Child Care and Development Fund, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/about/what-we-do>.

^{vii} For more information on the Child Care Certificate Program in Mississippi, see <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/early-childhood-care-development/for-parents/child-care-certificate-program/>.

^{viii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.

^{ix} For more information on TANF in Mississippi, see <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families-%28tanf%29/>.