



NRFC State Profile: Oklahoma July 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
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Domestic Violence	Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma promotes family strength, helps families in crisis, and provides <i>Project SAFE</i> , a federally funded domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking prevention program. The program uses the <i>SAFE Dates</i> curriculum in local schools and colleges to prevent and raise awareness of dating violence. <i>Project SAFE</i> also assists domestic abuse victims enrolled in higher education (college, technical schools, cosmetology schools, etc.) with emergency shelter, relocation assistance, transportation assistance, and counseling.	Choctaw Nation. Website 1 (800) 522-6170
Citizen Potawatomi Nation	Domestic Violence Economic Stability	Citizen Potawatomi Nation provides the federally funded <i>House of Hope</i> program for victims of family violence; parenting classes through the <i>Indian Child Welfare Program</i> ; and educational assistance and employment and training services for the economically disadvantaged, unemployed, and under-employed.	Potawatomi tribal jurisdiction. Website (405) 275-3176

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
COPE, Inc.	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability Domestic Violence Incarceration/Reentry	<p>The state funded Cope, Inc. offers three programs for parents and families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Oklahoma Fatherhood Program</i> is an 8-week fatherhood skills training program for fathers who are incarcerated or recently released, low-income, in their teens, non-custodial, or a new or expectant parent. • <i>Oklahoma Family Skills Development Program (OFSDP)</i> provides workshops, programs, and family counseling that address fatherhood, parenting, healthy relationships, and employment needs. • <i>Helping Children Cope with Divorce</i> helps parents and children adjust to the changes that come with divorce. <p>In addition, COPE's <i>Batterer's Intervention program</i> includes curricula that cover parenting, healthy relationships, and the effect of domestic violence on children.</p>	<p>Oklahoma County and surrounding counties.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(405) 528-8686</p>
Family and Children's Services	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships	<p>Family and Children's Services provide several state funded parenting and healthy relationships classes. Parenting classes are available for expectant parents, parents with minor-age children, stepfamilies, grandparents raising grandchildren, divorcing/ divorced families, and parents of children with ADHD. Healthy relationships classes help couples and families manage conflict, communicate effectively, and manage anger. The <i>Helping Children Cope with Divorce</i> class helps parents talk with their children about divorce, develop effective co-parenting skills, and manage conflict.</p>	<p>Tulsa, Broken Arrow, and Owasso.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(918) 560-1114</p>
It's My Community Initiative (IMCI)	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability Reentry	<p>IMCI was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. The organization implements <i>Work Ready Oklahoma (WRO)</i>, which incorporates <i>TRUE Dads</i> fatherhood services into its employment and training programs. <i>WRO</i> also provides employment and training services for individuals who qualify through the Oklahoma Department of Corrections Work Release program. Families enrolled in the <i>Family Expectations (FE)</i> program may have the opportunity to</p>	<p>Serves the entire state.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(405) 418-3921</p>

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
		participate in employment assistance programs such as <i>Training and Opportunity Preparation Service (TOPS)</i> and <i>Job Club</i> .	
Job Corps	Economic Stability	<i>Job Corps</i> is a federal job training program to help low-income young men and women ages 16 to 24 with educational and career goals.	There are three Job Corps centers in Oklahoma. They are located in Guthrie, Tahlequah, and Tulsa. Website with phone numbers.
Little Dixie Community Action Agency	Healthy Relationships	The state funded Little Dixie Community Action Agency provides an 8-week healthy relationships class through the <i>Little Dixie Healthy Marriage Initiative</i> . Classes are available for couples and single people who are the primary caregivers of a Head Start eligible child and are interested in building healthy relationships.	Choctaw, Pushmataha, and McCurtain counties. Website (580) 326-7581
Oklahoma Employment Security Commission	Economic Stability	Federally funded <i>Workforce Oklahoma Centers</i> , a service of the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, provide job search assistance for unemployed workers, veterans, dislocated workers, and other residents of Oklahoma. Assistance includes skills assessments and training opportunities. The Oklahoma Employment Security Commission website also offers employment resources and a state job bank.	Serves the entire state. Website with locations and phone numbers.
Public Strategies, Inc.	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Incarceration/Reentry	Public Strategies, Inc. has been a federal OFA grantee since 2006. The <i>Oklahoma Marriage Initiative</i> provides programs for fathers, families, expectant parents, couples, and individuals, including <i>TRUE Dads</i> and <i>Walking the Line</i> . <i>TRUE Dads</i> empowers fathers in the areas of parental involvement, communication with children, and forming healthy co-parenting relationships. <i>Walking the Line</i> is a healthy relationship and marriage skills workshop to help incarcerated men (and women) improve their family relationships upon release and reduce recidivism. Public Strategies also offers <i>Family Expectations</i> , which provides classes for new and expectant parents. Families learn	Serves the entire state. Website (405) 848-2171

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
		relationship building skills and the latest information to care for their new baby.	
Youth & Family Services, Inc.	Healthy Relationships	The state and federally funded Youth & Family Services, Inc. provides <i>Safe and Loving Relationships</i> , a healthy marriage and relationships program that improves communication skills, emotional understanding, conflict resolution, and stress and anger management. The program includes both child care and meals.	Canadian, Blaine, Kingfisher, and Oklahoma counties. Website (405) 262-6555

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 Oklahoma, unmarried parents must sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity form. Parents may complete this form at the hospital when the child is born, or at a later time at the Oklahoma State Department of Health Division of Vital Records, county health departments, Oklahoma Department of Human Services offices, and child support offices. In the event that the father is a minor, he will have up to 60 days after he turns 18 to sign the form. If paternity is disputed, either parent can open a case to establish paternity at their local child support office and Child Support Services will conduct genetic testing. If the test is positive, the father must pay the State back for the cost of the testing.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 Oklahoma, courts award custody and visitation based on the best interests of the child. Oklahoma law requires that parents involved in a custody proceeding attend a divorce education seminar. Every county also offers an Early Settlement Mediation Program through the courts; under this program, parents can work with mediators to try to reach an agreed-upon visitation schedule. The courts may award 1) sole legal custody, when one parent has the right to make legal decisions regarding the children’s welfare; 2) joint legal custody, when both parents have the right to make legal decisions regarding the children’s welfare; 3) sole physical custody, when the child lives with one parent and the other has specific visitation rights; or 4) joint physical custody, when the child resides with each parent for a substantial amount of time during the calendar year. Unless there is a concern about the safety of a child being with a parent, usually because there are problems about child abuse, drug use, heavy alcohol use, or other similar reason, a Court will order visitation by the parent not receiving physical or sole custody. Visitation may be weekend, holiday, or summer visitation.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

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS) implements Oklahoma Child Support Services throughout the state. There is a DHS office in every county. Go to the [website](#) or call (800) 522-2922 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}

Oklahoma 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 Oklahoma, 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.^v

In Oklahoma, the Child Care program provides subsidized child care for eligible low-income parents or guardians who are working, training, or receiving an education. To qualify, the child receiving care must be under 13, or under 19 if he

or she has a disability. The program may also provide benefits as part of a protective service plan to prevent abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The subsidy is paid directly to the child care provider on the family's behalf. The family may have a co-payment for the child care based on their income, the number of family members and the number of family members needing services. Parents may apply for Child Care Subsidy benefits by printing and completing a Request for Benefits form and mailing, faxing, or taking it to a local DHS office. After submitting a Request for Benefits, parents must complete an interview with a DHS worker and answer some additional eligibility questions.^{vi} As of June 1, 2016 Oklahoma DHS is not enrolling new families in the child care program due to lack of funding; however, families already in the program before that time will continue to receive benefits.^{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}

Oklahoma has no additional 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](#).^{ix}

In Oklahoma, families may apply for SNAP benefits by completing a Request for Benefits form and mailing, faxing, or taking it to a local DHS office. After submitting the form, a social services specialist will contact the family to schedule an interview. During this interview, families will provide information such as Social Security numbers, income verification, child support payments, and shelter and utility costs. Families who have previously had a SNAP case with DHS can apply for benefits through the OKDHS Live! website.^x If they are approved for food benefits, they will be issued an Access Oklahoma card. Each month their food benefits will be deposited into their card account. They can use this card to purchase food at most grocery stores and at many Farmers' Markets.^{xi}

In addition to SNAP, the Oklahoma Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) offers low-income, older citizens an opportunity to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits, vegetables and herbs from certified farmers. Seniors who meet low-income eligibility requirements receive a SFMNP-EBT card, which they use at participating farmer's markets to purchase fresh, locally-grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs. SFMNP runs from April 1st to November 1st.^{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.

To qualify for TANF in Oklahoma, families must have a child under 19 years of age and have low or very low income, and be either under-employed (working for very low wages), unemployed, or about to become unemployed. Applications for TANF can be filled out at a county DHS office. While receiving cash assistance, adult recipients are required to work or participate in activities geared toward work and achieving self-sufficiency. In some instances, TANF recipients may qualify for other work support services such as work activity payments and participation allowances after completion of approved work activities. TANF recipients also receive child support collection services from Child Support Enforcement.^{xiii}

Other Helpful Resources

Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (OCADVSA)

OCADVSA supports and assists domestic and sexual violence prevention agencies and shelters in Oklahoma. Those seeking assistance can call the Oklahoma Safeline at (800) 522-7233 or visit the [website](#) for a list of local programs and resources. OCADVSA also offers training and technical assistance for service providers, law enforcement, educators, mental health professionals, students, and other groups throughout Oklahoma.

Oklahoma Department of Corrections

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections provides resources for fathers transitioning back into communities. The [website](#) also includes other helpful resources about employment, food, housing, and medical, mental health, and drug treatment.

Oklahoma Partnership for Successful Reentry, Inc.

The Oklahoma Partnership for Successful Reentry is a statewide coalition of organizations that help ex-offenders who are reintegrating into society after prison, jail, probation, or moving from out-of-state. The [website](#) has a list of reentry service providers.



References

- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in Oklahoma, see <http://www.okdhs.org/services/ocss/Pages/patprocess.aspx> and <http://www.okdhs.org/services/ocss/Pages/patfaq.aspx>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on Child Custody in Oklahoma, see <http://oklaw.org/resource/child-custody-married-divorcing-parents?ref=qIM8x> and <http://oklaw.org/resource/visitation?ref=UW1JT>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement see <http://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 Child Care Assistance in Oklahoma, see <http://www.okdhs.org/services/cc/Pages/ChildCareBenefits.aspx> and <http://www.okdhs.org/services/cc/pages/faq.aspx#2>.
- ^{vii} For more information on Oklahoma's Child Care Assistance program freeze, see <http://kfor.com/2016/05/25/the-agency-has-run-out-of-money-dhs-says-theyre-freezing-child-care-subsidy-program/>.
- ^{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 To apply for SNAP benefits through OKDHSLive!, see <https://www.okdhslive.org>.
- ^{xi} For more information on SNAP in Oklahoma, see <http://www.okdhs.org/services/snap/Pages/default.aspx>.
- ^{xii} For more information on the Oklahoma Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, see http://www.okdhs.org/services/snap/pages/sfmnp_what.aspx.
- ^{xiii} For more information on TANF in Oklahoma, see <http://www.benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1675>.