



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



NRFC State Profile: Pennsylvania

August 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
AccessMatters	Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood	AccessMatters provides the state funded <i>I MATTER</i> teen pregnancy prevention program and other sexual and reproductive health information and services to encourage healthy decision making. The organization also runs school-based health resource centers where students can receive counseling, education, condoms, and referrals to community-based providers for sexual and reproductive health services.	Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. Website (215) 985-2600

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Capital Area Intermediate Unit	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability Domestic Violence Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood	The state funded <i>Education Leading to Employment and Career Training (ELECT)</i> program, a service of the Capital Area Intermediate Unit, helps pregnant and parenting teens earn a high school diploma or GED, improve parenting skills, and transition to employment or higher education. Program components include career prep, budgeting and life skills training, domestic violence and substance abuse information, and secondary pregnancy prevention education. <i>ELECT Fatherhood Services</i> provides services for young fathers, including father support groups, mentoring opportunities, and references for paternity establishment.	Cumberland, Dauphin, Perry, and northern York counties. Website (717) 732-8400 ext. 8504
Children's Aid Society in Clearfield County	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	The Children's Aid Society in Clearfield County provides the federally funded <i>Real Relationships</i> program, which offers marriage/relationship education and skills training and employment services. Parenting programs include the <i>Nurturing Parenting Program</i> , which helps with parenting and communication skills; the <i>Triple P Positive Parenting Program</i> , a 10-session course for parents of children ages 0-12; and <i>Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP)</i> , which supports primary caregivers who are grandparents or other relatives.	Clearfield County. Website (814) 765-2686, ext. 254
Community Action Development Commission (CADCOM)	Fatherhood/Parenting	CADCOM's state funded <i>Fatherhood Initiative</i> provides weekly group meetings and individual counseling sessions for low-income fathers. The program is for fathers whose income is at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level, and is free of charge.	Montgomery County. Website (610) 277-6363 ext. 167

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Community Prevention Partnership of Berks County	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability Reentry Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood	The state funded Community Prevention Partnership of Berks County provides several parenting programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community Centered Healthy Marriage and Relationship Training (CCHMR)</i> – Healthy relationship education for high school students, skill-building, and job enhancement for adults, including those reentering the community from the prison system. • <i>Education Leading to Employment and Career Training (ELECT)</i> – helps pregnant and parenting youth with parenting and economic self-sufficiency skills. • <i>Parent Partner Program</i> – parenting education, referrals, and information for parents with children involved in the child-serving systems. 	Reading School District and I-LEAD Charter School. Website (610) 376-6988
Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Inc. (HPC)	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	HPC was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 for the <i>Focus on Fathers</i> program, which provides low-income fathers with training for fatherhood/parenting, healthy relationships, and job readiness skills. HPC also provides <i>Relationship Education in the Mix (REMIX)</i> , a 12-week program for couples and co-parents.	Philadelphia. Website (215) 731-6150
Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Pittsburgh (JF&CS)	Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	The federally funded JF&CS offers the <i>Pittsburgh Refugee Healthy Families</i> program, which helps refugees and ethnically-diverse populations learn ways to maintain healthy families, develop communication skills, and resolve conflicts as they adjust to American culture. The program is part of JF&CS’ services to assist refugees resettling in American communities. JF&CS also offers help with employment and other aspects of refugee resettlement.	Pittsburgh. Website (412) 422-7200

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
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 4 Job Corps centers in Pennsylvania. They are located in Drums, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Lopez. Website with locations and phone numbers.
Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America, Inc. (OICA)	Healthy Relationships Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood	Federally funded OICA offers the <i>Healthy Marriage Education Project</i> , which teaches high school students about healthy relationships and delivers classes, community presentations, and other special events for youth and their families. OICA also offers the <i>Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative</i> , which seeks to reduce the percentage of youth engaging in premature or unsafe sexual activity and educate youth on the importance of leading a sexually healthy lifestyle.	Philadelphia County. Website (215) 236-4500
PathStone	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability Domestic Violence	State and federally funded PathStone provides the <i>Healthy Marriage Initiative</i> for families enrolled in Head Start. Services include: relationship workshops, couples enrichment weekends, parent-teen communication workshops, marriage counseling, relationship assessments, domestic violence prevention education, financial literacy education, and drug and alcohol prevention services.	Carbon County. Website (800) 888-6770
Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS)	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	Pennsylvania DHS sponsors 32 state funded Family Centers. Services vary by center and include parent support groups, parenting training, child health screenings, toy and book lending libraries, child care programs, the <i>Parents as Teachers</i> home visiting program for parents of children ages 0 to 5, and employment assistance.	Serves the entire state. Website with locations

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
People For People, Inc.	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	The federally funded People For People Inc. provides <i>Project D.A.D. (Developing Active Dads)</i> for non-custodial fathers. The program also provides financial stability assistance through intensive employment services and case management support.	Philadelphia Website (215) 235-2340
Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/ Fayette, Inc.	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	The Private Industry Council of Westmoreland/ Fayette, Inc. was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. The <i>New Pathways Toward Responsible Fatherhood</i> project helps fathers with parenting skills, relationship skills, and job search assistance. The Council also uses federal funding to provide parenting skills training through the Center of Excellence: Social-Emotional Early Development Success (<i>SEEDS</i>) Project.	Westmoreland and Fayette counties. Website (724) 836-2600
The Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS)	Economic Stability	The CWDS runs Pennsylvania CareerLink Centers, where unemployed workers, veterans, dislocated workers, and other Pennsylvanians can get job search assistance, including skills assessments, training opportunities, employment resources, and a state job bank.	Website with locations and phone numbers.
The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections	Fatherhood/Parenting Incarceration/Reentry Domestic Violence	The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections provides an <i>InsideOut Dad</i> program to help incarcerated fathers reconnect with their families. Other services include: vocational and educational programs, batterer's intervention, violence prevention, and substance abuse treatment.	Pennsylvania state correctional facilities. Website (717) 728-2573
Youth Service, Inc. (YSI)	Fatherhood/Parenting	The state and federally funded YSI provides family based services and parenting education through home visiting and the <i>Enhancing Parenting Program (EPP)</i> , which offers weekly parenting classes based on the <i>Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families</i> curriculum.	Philadelphia. Website (215) 222-3262

Policies to Promote Responsible Fatherhood

Paternal 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 Pennsylvania, unmarried parents can sign an Acknowledgement of Paternity (AOP) form and file it at the Bureau of Child Support Enforcement at the time of the child's birth or any time before the child turns 18. If the mother does not sign the AOP form, the father can complete and sign the form so it may be registered and certified as a claim of paternity for the child. A claim of paternity does not give the father any rights to the child; however, the father is entitled to receive notice of proceedings terminating the mother's parental rights to the child. If the father does not sign the AOP form, paternity must be established through the courts. If either parent has doubts about who is the biological father, then either parent can go to the Domestic Relations Section and request paternity establishment through genetic 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.

If parents in Pennsylvania cannot reach a custody agreement on their own, then the court awards custody based on the best interest of the child. Pennsylvania courts recognize legal and physical custody. Legal custody is the right to make major decisions on behalf of the child, such as medical, religious and educational decisions. Physical custody is actual physical possession and control of a child. Either parent can file an action for any form of legal or physical custody. The court may award any combination of sole physical custody, primary physical custody, shared physical custody, partial physical custody, supervised physical custody, sole legal custody, and shared legal custody. Pennsylvania's custody law does not use the word visitation. Partial physical custody, shared physical custody and supervised physical custody are terms that may be used in place of visitation. Factors influencing the court's decision include, but are not limited to, the child's preferences, the availability of extended family, the level of conflict between the parents, and the ability of the parents to attend to the child's needs.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 Pennsylvania Department of Human Services runs the Pennsylvania Child Support program through Domestic Relations Sections in every county. Parents can request support services online or at their county Domestic Relations Section. Go to the [website](http://www.fatherhood.gov) or call (800) 932-0211 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}

Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania, 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

Child Care Works provides low-income parents in Pennsylvania with subsidized child care. Children are eligible for child care if they are 13 or under 19 and have a disability. To qualify, families must have an annual income that is 200 percent or less than the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Each adult family member must work at least 20 hours a week, or work at least 10 hours a week combined with at least 10 hours a week of participation in an approved training program. Teen parents must attend an education program. The family's income and size determines the amount of assistance they receive. The parent may choose any eligible provider, and the subsidy payment is sent directly to the child care program. The family will pay the remaining child care cost.^{vi}

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.^{vii}

In Pennsylvania, county-level Homeless Assistance Programs (HAP) may be able to assist families at risk of being evicted from their apartment or home. HAP may work with the family's landlord to maximize chances of being able to stay in the home, or work with the family to find a more affordable apartment. HAP can also help families move out of shelter into an affordable apartment.^{viii}

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 Pennsylvania, families can apply for SNAP online using the COMPASS online application^x or by filing an application at their county assistance office. The family's income and size determines the amount of assistance they receive. SNAP recipients who are able-bodied adults without dependents between 18 and 49 must work or participate in a work program to maintain eligibility for SNAP.^{xi}

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 Pennsylvania, families may qualify for TANF if they are low-income and have combined resources (excluding residence) valuing \$1,000 or less. Families may apply for TANF online using COMPASS^{xii} or by filing an application at their county assistance office. Families can receive TANF benefits for up to 60 months (5 years) in a lifetime. Families receiving TANF benefits work with a caseworker to complete an Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR). The AMR is a plan for what the family will do for income when they stop receiving TANF benefits, such as looking for work, attending a job training program, or applying for Social Security benefits. The caseworker will work with each individual to recommend training and job search options, and will also help set up child care. All able-bodied adults are required to look for a job or participate in an employment and training program.

The Diversion Program is an alternative to TANF that provides short-term assistance for families that cannot pay their bills now, but expect to have a new source of income to support their family in a few months. Diversion is a one-time lump sum payment. The payment is dependent upon a family's need, with the maximum payment set at three times the Family Size Allowance (FSA). To receive a Diversion payment, families first must be eligible for ongoing TANF benefits and then must meet all the Diversion requirements. Families can only receive Diversion payment once in a 12-month period.^{xiii}

The Refugee Cash Assistance Program provides money for up to eight months from the date of entry into the United States for refugees who do not meet Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) eligibility requirements.^{xiv}

The State Blind Pension Program provides blind pension benefits for adults 21 and older in Pennsylvania who meet visual requirements and other conditions of eligibility. Individuals may apply at their local county assistance office.^{xv}

Other Helpful Resources

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)

PCADV is a coalition of 60 programs and shelters that help domestic violence victims and their children. While it does not provide direct services, PCADV helps victims connect to community resources such as 24-hour hotlines, shelter, counseling, advocacy, and economic support. The [website](#) provides a list of service providers by county.

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)

PCAR is a statewide coalition of rape crisis centers that provide services for survivors of sexual violence, rape, and incest. While it does not provide direct services, the coalition maintains a 24-hour referral hotline and a [website](#) with links to its affiliated centers.

References

- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in Pennsylvania, see https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/cs/ws/cs_ws_controller.aspx?3VI7r5YaWGhLCw_7xtBY4CVnqWgMxWNtyUIlhO9@tYmp1zLyhEOmnNS33jKRWU4emcbhs78MD6zj0IXgn2ZOLw--DyRCAvJcYh2uFtNpYhttjTwiz6Xpdem5uxajtLbT2XKcy9KdCiAt.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on Child Custody in Pennsylvania, see <https://www.courts.phila.gov/pdf/forms/domestic-relations/prose-custody-complaint.pdf>.
- 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 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 Works in Pennsylvania, see <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/childcareearlylearning/childcareworkssubsidizedchildcareprogram/>.
- ^{vii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.
- ^{viii} For more information on rental assistance or the Homeless Assistance Program in Pennsylvania, see <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/homelessassistance/>.
- ^{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 in Pennsylvania online, see <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/public/cmphome>.
- ^{xi} For more information on SNAP in Pennsylvania, see <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/supplementalnutritionassistanceprogram/>.
- ^{xii} To apply for TANF in Pennsylvania online, see <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/public/cmphome>.
- ^{xiii} For more information on the Diversion Program in Pennsylvania, see <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/cashassistance/diversionandmovingtoindependence/index.htm>.
- ^{xiv} For more information on Refugee Cash Assistance, see <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/cashassistance/refugeecashassistanceandmovingtoindependence/index.htm>.
- ^{xv} For more information on Pennsylvania's State Blind Pension Program, see <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/cashassistance/stateblindpensionprogramandmovingtoindependence/index.htm>.