



## NRFC State Profile: Texas

### September 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
<b>Alliance for North Texas Healthy and Effective Marriages (ANTHEM)</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Domestic Violence Economic Stability	ANTHEM was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015. The <i>TYRO Champion Dad (TCD)</i> program provides parenting and relationship skills training for fathers, and employment services through the Texas Workforce Commission. ANTHEM also provides workshops to prevent domestic violence and improve communication and conflict resolution skills.	Dallas.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (214) 426-0900
<b>AVANCE, Inc.</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability Domestic Violence	AVANCE, Inc. was awarded two federal grants from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015: 1) AVANCE-San Antonio offers the <i>Fathers In Action/Padres Activos</i> program, which provides fatherhood/parenting classes, financial literacy training, and couples’ workshops focused on relationship skills. 2) AVANCE–Houston offers services to enhance healthy relationship and marriage skills, improve parenting, and assist adults toward greater economic stability through a range of employment services. AVANCE offers other services in various locations, including the <i>Parent-Child Program</i> for families with children from birth to age 3.	Austin, Dallas, Del Rio, El Paso, San Antonio, Houston, and Waco.  AVANCE - San Antonio <a href="#">Website</a> (210) 223-3667  AVANCE - Houston <a href="#">Website</a> (713) 812-0033  <a href="#">General AVANCE Website</a> with location and contact information.

**Take Time to Be a Dad Today**

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



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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<b>Family Services of Greater Houston</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships	The federally funded Family Services of Greater Houston provides classes on parenting and family life, as well as co-parenting and divorce. Classes cover topics such as effective discipline, building healthy self-esteem in your child, how to talk to your child, child development, and anger management.	Houston, Baytown, Brookshire, Bay Area, Stafford, and The Woodlands.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (713) 861-4849
<b>Goodwill Industries of Central Texas</b>	Economic Stability	Goodwill Industries receives federal funding to run education, job training, and workforce advancement programs. Goodwill Central Texas' program offers weekly career readiness activities such as job searching, applying for jobs, interview coaching, resumes and cover letters, and career readiness trainings.	Austin, Round Rock, Georgetown, and San Marcos.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (512) 637-7580
<b>Horizon Outreach</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	Horizon Outreach's federally funded <i>Horizon Eagle</i> program assists fathers with parenting skills, healthy relationships, and employment. They place a particular emphasis on assistance for fathers transitioning from military to civilian life and at-risk civilian young fathers, who have similar transition issues due to former incarceration, adverse childhood experiences, homelessness, mental health issues, and other experiences that can lead to trauma.	Greater Houston Metropolitan Area.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (713) 467-4966
<b>Job Corps</b>	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 four Job Corps centers in Texas. They are located in El Paso, San Marcos, Laredo, and McKinney.  <a href="#">Website</a> with locations and phone numbers.
<b>Motivation, Education and Training, Inc.</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	Motivation, Education and Training, Inc. was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to provide parenting, relationship and employment skills training for fathers.	Austin, Chambers, Hardin, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller counties, and the city of Humble.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (281) 689-5544



Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<b>Texas A&amp;M AgriLife Extension Service</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to provide the <i>Strengthening Families of the Brazos Valley (SFBV)</i> program, which provides individuals and couples with healthy relationship, parenting, and financial literacy education.	Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Madison and Robertson counties.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (979) 823-0129
<b>Texas Advocacy Project</b>	Domestic Violence	The state funded Texas Advocacy Project provides free legal services for victims of domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Victims who cannot find help from traditional non-profit organizations due to income requirements, cultural, language, or geographic barriers are eligible. Services include Free Legal Lines, Protective Order Packets, the <i>Emergency Protective Order Program</i> , the <i>Assisted Pro Se Program</i> , Economic Abuse services, Teen Outreach, and Technical Advocacy.	Serves the entire state.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (512) 476-5377
<b>Texas Health and Human Services Commission</b>	Domestic Violence	The Texas Health and Human Services Commission runs the <i>Family Violence Program</i> , which provides services for adult victims of family violence, child victims of family violence, and victims of teen dating violence. Services are free and include: 24-hour hotline, temporary 24-hour shelter, legal advocacy, emergency transportation, and referrals to other resources.	Serves the entire state.  <a href="#">Website</a> with local hotline numbers  (512) 424-6500
<b>Texas ReEntry Services, Inc.</b>	Reentry Domestic Violence Economic Stability	The state and federally funded Texas ReEntry Services, Inc. offers services for ex-offenders reentering their communities. Services include case management, employment assistance, and housing referrals. <i>Job Readiness Training (JRT)</i> is a three-day (12-hour) job training program that addresses many of the barriers ex-offenders encounter when seeking employment. Upon completion of the course, clients receive résumé writing assistance and job referrals to employers in the community.	Fort Worth.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (817) 834-2833

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<b>Texas State University-San Marcos</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships	Texas State University was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to provide <i>Strengthening Relationships/ Strengthening Families</i> , a parenting and relationship education program for pregnant and parenting teens. The program provides teens with ways to strengthen their romantic relationship skills and parental and co-parental relationships.	Central Texas.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (512) 245-2155
<b>Texas Workforce Commission</b>	Economic Stability	Workforce Solutions Offices provides assistance for unemployed workers, veterans, dislocated workers, and other residents of Texas. Texans can get help with job searching, including skills assessments and training opportunities. The Texas Workforce Commission’s website lists office locations, program and services information, and a state job bank.	Serves the entire state.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (512) 463-2222
<b>The Parenting Center</b>	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	The Parenting Center was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to provide the <i>Empowering Families Project</i> , which offers training to enhance marriage/relationship skills and help with employment and career advancement. The organization also offers free <i>Marriage Enrichment Group (MEG) Date Nights</i> , and online self-paced parenting classes.	Fort Worth.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (817) 332-6348
<b>Unlocking DOORS Texas Reentry Network</b>	Reentry	The state and federally funded Unlocking DOORS provides services for ex-offenders reentering their communities. Services include a risk/needs assessment, individualized reentry plan, and referrals to community programs.	Dallas and Fort Worth.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (214) 296-9258
<b>Urban Community Center of North Texas, Inc.</b>	Economic Stability Reentry	The federally funded Urban Community Center of North Texas, Inc. provides employment and training services, including computer technology and specialized services for seniors, re-entry populations, and Veterans.	Dallas, Garland, Irving, and Pleasant Grove.  <a href="#">Website</a>  (469) 913-8202

## 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 Texas, parents can establish paternity 1) voluntarily or 2) through a court order. A father may voluntarily acknowledge paternity by signing an Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) form before, at the time of, or after a child's birth. The AOP form can be signed at the hospital at the time of birth, at the county birth registrar's office, at an Office of the Attorney General (OAG) child support office, or by an AOP certified entity. There is no cost to complete an AOP for a child. Paternity may be established through a court order if either parent is unsure of paternity, if family violence is a concern, or if parents do not wish to use the AOP process for any other reason.<sup>i</sup> If genetic testing is appropriate, it must be done before completing an AOP. Parents can get tested through a private lab or by purchasing over-the-counter tests available through many pharmacies. If a parent opens a child support case with the OAG and a DNA test is necessary, one will generally be provided at no cost.<sup>ii</sup>**

### 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 Texas, custody is called "conservatorship." Courts generally favor joint conservatorship, as long as it is in the best interest of the child. Most custody decisions name the parents Joint Managing Conservators (JMCs) unless there is a good reason not to, such as a history of domestic violence or child abuse. A JMC order normally means the parents share decision making about the child's education, medical treatment, and similar issues. A JMC does not mean the child's time is split equally between the parents. In most custody orders, one parent has the right to determine the child's primary physical residence and, if the parents can't agree on a visitation schedule, the order will also establish guidelines for when each parent spends time with the child.<sup>iii</sup>**

### 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.<sup>iv</sup>

**The Child Support Division of the Office of the Attorney General administers the child support program in Texas. Parents can apply for services online or by requesting an application. Child support services are provided at no cost. Go to the [website](http://www.fatherhood.gov) or call (800) 252-8014 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.<sup>v</sup>

**Texas 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 Texas, 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.<sup>vi</sup>

**In Texas, the Child Care Management Services (CCMS) program of the Texas Workforce Commission helps eligible parents with the cost of child care. Workforce Development Boards administer child care assistance through the Workforce Solutions offices. Parents with a child under 13 who are: 1) receiving or transitioning off of public assistance, 2) who are receiving or needing protective services, and 3) whose families are low-income, may qualify for child care assistance. There are additional eligibility requirements that vary in different regions of the state.<sup>vii</sup>**

### 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.<sup>viii</sup>

**The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs provides ongoing rental assistance for needy families for up to two years or longer, including Section 8 vouchers and reduced rent apartments.<sup>ix</sup>**

### 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](#).<sup>x</sup>

**The Health and Human Services Commission oversees the SNAP program in Texas. SNAP food benefits are put on to the Lone Star Card, which can be used like a credit card at any store that accepts SNAP. Most people ages 16 to 59 must look for a job or be in an approved work program to receive SNAP benefits. Most adults ages 18 to 50 with no children in the home can receive SNAP for only 3 months in a 3-year period. The benefit period might be longer if the person works at least 20 hours a week or is in a job or training program. Some adults might not have to work to get benefits, such as those who have a disability or are pregnant.**<sup>xi</sup>

### 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 Health and Human Services Commission oversees the TANF program in Texas. Low-income families may apply for TANF benefits online or by calling 211. In most cases, families can interview over the phone and do not need to come into the office for the interview. TANF is divided into three programs. 1) *TANF for families* provides cash assistance for families with a child age 18 or younger. A family can be parents and their children, or relatives caring for related children. Families receiving TANF must agree to certain requirements, such as training or looking for work, getting their children vaccinated, and making sure their children attends school. 2) *One-time TANF* provides a one-time payment for families (with a child 18 or younger) experiencing a crisis, such as losing a job, losing a home, or a medical emergency. Families can only receive this cash payment once a year. 3) *One-time TANF for grandparents* is a payment of \$1,000 for a low-income grandparent age 45 or older who cares for a child receiving TANF.**<sup>xii</sup>

## Other Helpful Resources

### Fatherhood Coalition of Tarrant County

The Fatherhood Coalition of Tarrant County creates public awareness of the value of responsible fatherhood and provides assistance for organizations that serve fathers. Additionally, the Coalition participates in community events such as health and wellness fairs, back-to-school round-ups, and job fairs. The [website](#) includes national and state resources plus local resources for fathers in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

### Texas Access and Visitation Hotline

The Texas Attorney General runs a hotline for parents seeking information about services and basic legal information on child access and visitation issues. The statewide toll-free number, (866) 292-4636, is available in English and Spanish, Monday – Friday from 1-7 p.m. The hotline's [website](#) has additional materials and tools for assistance with child access issues.

### Texas Council on Family Violence

The Texas Council on Family Violence is a statewide coalition that supports and assists domestic violence prevention agencies and shelters. It trains and supports service providers, conducts statewide advocacy to support victims and survivors of domestic violence, and facilitates violence prevention efforts. The [website](#) offers resources for survivors, such as a service directory for emergency shelters and centers, safety planning, and legal resources.

### Twogether in Texas

Twogether in Texas connects couples with service providers who provide marital, pre-marital, and relationship enhancement classes throughout the state. The [website](#) has a search tool for couples to find a service provider closest to them.

### 2-1-1 Texas

2-1-1 Texas is a free, anonymous social service hotline that helps Texas residents connect with the services they need, such as child care, housing, and mental health needs. The statewide hotline number is 211, or (877) 541-7905 and is available 24/7. Texans can also access the [website](#) for additional information.

## References

<sup>i</sup> For more information on paternity establishment in Texas, see <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cs/establishing-paternity>.

<sup>ii</sup> For more information on genetic testing in Texas, see <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/faq/cs-aop-frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>iii</sup> For more information on Child Custody in Texas, see <http://texaslawhelp.org/resource/child-custody-in-texas-fact-sheet?ref=bwd44> and [https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/qa\\_ncp.pdf](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/files/cs/qa_ncp.pdf).

<sup>iv</sup> For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css).

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

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

<sup>vii</sup> For more information on Child Care Assistance in Texas, see <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/jobseekers/child-care-services>.

<sup>viii</sup> For more information on Rental Assistance, see [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental\\_assistance](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance).

<sup>ix</sup> For more information on the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, see <https://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/texans.htm>.

<sup>x</sup> For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.

<sup>xi</sup> For more information on SNAP in Texas, see <https://yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov/programs/snap>.

<sup>xii</sup> For more information on TANF in Texas, see <https://yourtexasbenefits.hhsc.texas.gov/programs/tanf>.