



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



NRFC State Profile: Washington October 2015

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 2015) 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
Children's Home Society of Washington	Fatherhood/Parenting	The Children's Home Society of Washington is a federally funded organization that provides a number of parent education programs, including <i>24/7 Dad</i> , <i>Incredible Years</i> , <i>Conscious Fathering</i> , <i>Project SafeCare</i> , <i>Strengthening Families</i> , <i>Nurturing Parenting</i> , <i>Triple P Parent Coaching</i> , and <i>Parents as Teachers</i> home visiting.	Services are provided in Spokane, Walla Walla, Seattle, Wenatchee, and Vancouver. Website (206) 695-3200
Job Corps	Economic Stability	<i>Job Corps</i> is a federal job training program that helps low-income young people reach their educational and career goals.	Job Corp Centers are located in Sedro-Woolley, Moses Lakes, Curlew, and White Swan. Website (800) 733-JOBS

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Parent Trust	Fatherhood/Parenting	Parent Trust is a state-funded organization that offers two fatherhood programs: 1) <i>Conscious Fathering</i> provides expectant and new fathers an opportunity to learn their newborn baby's basic needs and offers tips to help new fathers work with their partner in caring for and nurturing their children. 2) <i>Great Starts</i> educates parents on pregnancy, childbirth preparation, newborn care, infant health, and safety.	Conscious Fathering is offered in Seattle and Renton. Great Start Classes are offered in Seattle, Renton, Bellevue, and Mountlake Terrace. Website (800) 932-HOPE
Take Charge	Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood	Take Charge is a family planning demonstration and research program approved by the federal government under a Medicaid program waiver. The purpose of Take Charge is to make family planning services available to men and women with incomes at or below two hundred fifty percent of the federal poverty level.	Services are provided in many counties throughout the state. Phone numbers for various locations available here: Website
Washington State Department of Corrections	Incarceration/Reentry Responsible Parenting Healthy Relationships Economic Stability	The Department of Corrections was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to help incarcerated parents (fathers and mothers) prepare for release, strengthen relationships with their children, enhance employment opportunities and increase education levels. Pre- and post-release services will focus on responsible parenting, healthy relationships, education, and employment. The Department also offers a number of family support services, including parenting classes, family-centered events and activities, assistance with reunification, child support reduction services, and referrals to other social services and support.	Services under the new grant will focus on offenders returning to Thurston, Clark, Lewis and Cowlitz counties from three men's and two women's facilities in Southwest Washington. Information on new grant (360) 725-8212 Information on Family Support programs (360) 725-8816
Washington State Department of Social and Health	Economic Stability	The Division of Child Support provides an employment-focused initiative, the <i>Alternative Solutions Program</i> , to help	Alternative Solutions Program services are

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Services (DSHS) – Division of Child Support		noncustodial parents who need assistance meeting their child support obligations. Noncustodial parents in need of services are referred to specialists called “navigators” who provide extra assistance and coaching for noncustodial parents to engage in employment-related activities.	available throughout the state. Website (360) 664-5028
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)- Domestic Violence Services	Domestic Violence	DSHS contracts with local agencies to provide services for victims, including community-based shelters, emergency counseling, and legal advocacy for children and families who have experienced domestic violence. DSHS also sets minimum standards for domestic violence perpetrator programs and certifies provider programs.	DSHS provides contact information for agencies that provide services for victims and programs that are certified as perpetrator treatment programs: Website Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline: 1(800) 562-6025
Washington’s WorkSource	Economic Stability	Washington’s WorkSource centers provide job training and employment assistance, including services offered through one-stop WorkSource employment and training centers. WorkSource is a joint venture of state and local government agencies with local community based organizations.	WorkSource centers are located throughout the state. WorkSource Office Directory Website with more information about services

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.

There are three ways for unmarried parents to establish legal paternity in Washington:

1. In cases when the mother is in a registered domestic partnership while she is pregnant, her partner is the legal parent unless this is challenged by someone else;
2. A man can sign a "paternity acknowledgment" form so that he can be deemed the child's legal father after the form is notarized and filed at the Washington State Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics; and
3. A court may determine the identity of the legal parent, which may require a genetic test of the mother, child, and alleged father.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.

Under state law in Washington, the courts make decisions about child custody when parents cannot reach an agreement. Courts base these decisions on what they conclude to be in the "child's best interest." State law defines this as the parenting arrangement that best keeps the child healthy and stable. The state holds that it is often best when the parent and child maintain their existing bond as much as possible. However, a child may need to be separated from a parent if the child is at risk of harm.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

In Washington, the Division of Child Support (DCS) is in charge of child support. DCS sets up, reviews and modifies child support obligations and also collects the payments. Parents may receive child support if they have custody of a minor child or if they used to have custody of a minor child and are owed back support. Parents may be able to modify a child support order due to a "significant change in circumstances," including losing a job, incurring a disability, or having new children to support.^{iv} The website for DCS provides information on applying for, paying, and receiving child support. The website is <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/division-child-support> and the phone number is 1(800) 457-6202.

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

In addition to the benefits allowed by the federal FMLA, Washington has also passed a Family Care Act and Family Leave Act. The state leave policies extend the FMLA in several ways. The state policies allow all workers with paid leave benefits to use earned sick leave or other paid time off (such as vacation time) to care for family members. It also removes the federal mandate that an illness must last for at least three consecutive days to be eligible.

Additionally, in the case of a pregnancy, when a woman works for an employer who has 50 or more employees within 75 miles of the pregnant woman's worksite, and she has worked for the employer at least one year and has worked 1,250 hours in the past 12 months, she will qualify for an additional 12 weeks of the state family leave (FLA) in addition to the pregnancy disability leave offered by her health care provider. This will give her more total protected leave from work than the leave offered under the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). And if a qualifying employee exhausts all or part of their FMLA for an exigent reason related to a military deployment or for military caregiver leave, then they may have access to all 12 weeks of their state family leave for self-care or the care of a seriously ill family member.

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.

Many states have multiple Head Start programs providing services for fathers. **To find information on Head Start programs in Washington, go to:**

http://www.wsaheadstarteceap.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=menus&menu_id=45&pld=10

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 Washington, Child Care Subsidy Programs help families pay for child care through two programs: *Working Connections Child Care* and *Seasonal Child Care*. The *Working Connections Child Care* program pays for child care subsidies to eligible households with parents who are working or are participating in a Department of Social and Health Services approved work activity and whose children meet citizenship requirements. The *Seasonal Child Care* program pays for child care subsidies to eligible seasonally employed agricultural families who live in designated counties and are not receiving TANF 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}

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 2014, the average monthly SNAP benefit per individual was \$125.35.^{ix}

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst

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 Washington, a family must have assets of \$1,000 or less in order to qualify for TANF. The *WorkFirst* program provides temporary cash assistance and offers employment services, education and training programs, and career development. Most individuals are limited to 60 months of lifetime benefits under this program.^x Washington also has a *Diversion Cash Assistance (DCA)* program which provides alternative assistance for families who have a short term need and do not wish to receive TANF assistance. DCA can help with expenses such as housing, transportation, medical bills, employment, and childcare. In order to qualify for DCA, families must meet the income and resource requirements and be able to demonstrate that they expect to have income and resources to meet their long-term needs. Families who receive this assistance are expected to not need TANF assistance for the next 12 months.^{xi}

References

- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in Washington, see <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/faq/how-may-i-legally-establish-parentage>
- ⁱⁱ To learn more about state custody laws, see <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?Cite=26>
- ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse
- ^{iv} For more information on Child Support in Washington, see <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/division-child-support>
- ^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 eligibility requires for Child Care Subsidy Programs, see <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/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 For more information on WorkFirst, see <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/community-services-offices/tanf-and-support-services>
- ^{xi} For more information on Diversion Cash Assistance, see <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/diversion-cash-assistance-dca>