



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



NRFC State Profile: West Virginia 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
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 two Job Corps centers in West Virginia. They are located in Charleston and Harpers Ferry. Website with locations and phone numbers.
Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action, Inc. (KISRA)	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Incarceration/Reentry Economic Stability Domestic Violence	KISRA was awarded a federal grant from the Office of Family Assistance in September 2015 to provide the <i>West Virginia ReFORM Initiative</i> for current and previously incarcerated fathers 25 years of age and older. Services include relationship, parenting, and job skills training via KISRA hubs in eight West Virginia Counties. The hubs include jails, prisons, work release centers, day report centers, One-Stop Career Centers, and community-based sites. KISRA also provides transportation and housing assistance, domestic violence awareness training, transitional employment assistance, and referrals for legal assistance or substance abuse and mental health treatment.	Kanawha, Putnam, Cabell, Raleigh, Mercer, Wood, Randolph, and Berkeley counties. Website (304) 768-8924

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Mission West Virginia (MWV)	Preventing Unwanted/ Early Fatherhood Healthy Relationships	MWV offers the state and federally funded <i>T.H.I.N.K. (Teaching Health Instead of Nagging Kids)</i> pregnancy prevention and healthy relationship programs for adolescents.	Serves multiple counties in West Virginia. Website (304) 562-0723
Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center (RDVIC)	Domestic Violence	The state and federally funded RDVIC provides services for survivors of domestic violence, child abuse, incest, sexual assault, elder care abuse, care giver abuse, sexual harassment, and stalking. Services include emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, advocacy, and community education.	Monongalia, Preston, and Taylor Counties. Website 24-hour crisis hotline (304) 292-5100
West Virginia Department of Corrections	Incarceration/Reentry Economic Stability Domestic Violence	The West Virginia Division of Corrections provides services for inmates that include educational and vocational programs, addiction treatment, reentry programs, batterer's intervention programs, and domestic violence prevention programs.	Correctional facilities throughout the state. Website (304) 558-2036
WorkForce West Virginia	Economic Stability	The federally funded WorkForce West Virginia oversees the state unemployment insurance program and provides job search assistance, veterans services, dislocated workers services, and labor market information through one-stop career centers. The website includes additional employment resources and a state job bank.	Serves the entire state. Website with locations and phone numbers. (800) 252-JOBS (5627)

Policies to Promote Responsible Fatherhood

Paternity Establishment

Establishing paternity gives a child born outside of marriage the same legal rights and privileges as a child born to married parents. Children gain access to family medical history and rights to inheritance, fathers' medical and life insurance benefits, social security and veterans' benefits, and child support. In addition, Native American children gain tribal enrollment rights.

In West Virginia, there are two ways for unmarried parents to establish paternity. 1) Parents can sign a Declaration of Paternity Affidavit and get the signatures notarized at the hospital when the child is born, or sign and file the form with the Division of Vital Registration Statistics at any time before the child's 18th birthday (or 21st birthday, if actions are brought by the child). 2) A parent can establish paternity through a court order by going to their local Bureau for Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) office and requesting paternity services. If either parent is unsure of who is the biological father, then the BCSE will assist with 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.

In West Virginia, the Family Court requires a Parenting Plan in all divorce cases involving minor children. The Parenting Plan allocates custodial responsibility, time spent with children, and responsibility for making major decisions on behalf of the child. The court encourages parents to create and submit a Joint Parenting Plan. In most cases, the court will accept submitted plans as “Permanent Parenting Plans”, with the potential for future modifications as needed. Instances in which the court may not accept a submitted plan include 1) if the plan would be harmful to the children in some way, 2) one parent did not agree to the plan voluntarily, or 3) one parent did not fully understand the Parenting Plan agreement. If parents cannot agree on a Joint Parenting Plan, then either parent can submit an Individual Proposed Parenting Plan. If a parent wants to contest the other parent’s Individual Parenting Plan, they must submit their own Plan. All individual plans must be accompanied by a corresponding “Worksheet for Individual Proposed Parenting Plan” form. If parents submitting Individual Parenting Plans are unable to work together to reach an agreement on a Joint Parenting Plan, the court will refer them to a Premediation Screener, who may in turn refer them to a Mediator. If parents are still unable to reach an agreement, the court will make a decision based on the best interests of the child, the way that parents have shared responsibilities in the past, and any reasons given to explain why one parent may be unfit or unable to share parenting responsibilities in the future.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 West Virginia Bureau for Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) has an office in every county. Parents can download an English or Spanish application for child support services online and mail or deliver the application to their local child support office. There is no fee for services provided by BCSE. Go to the [website](#) or call (304) 558-3780 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}

West Virginia has no additional 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 West Virginia, 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

West Virginia's Child Care Program provides subsidized child care while parents work, attend training, or are otherwise unable to provide care. The program is for families with a child up to age 13 (or age 18 if a child has special needs) and whose monthly gross income (before taxes and deductions) falls below 150 percent of the 2014 Federal Poverty Level. Once eligible, the family may continue to receive certificates until their income exceeds 185 percent of the 2014 Federal Poverty Level. In most cases, families pay a portion of the cost of care. The Division of Early Care & Education also provides information on selecting appropriate child care options and manages a statewide system of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, which provide resource information and financial assistance for eligible families.^{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}

West Virginia has no additional state provisions for rental assistance.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly the Food Stamp program, provides low-income individuals (both men and women) and families with funds delivered in an electronic benefit transfer card, or EBT card) that can be used to purchase food. SNAP is administered within the Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services and is federally funded, but applications, delivery, and outreach are handled at the state or local level. In general, individuals and households are eligible to receive SNAP if they have less than \$2,250 in countable resources and earn less than 130 percent of the poverty line in gross monthly income. However, characteristics of recipients (for example, age or disabled status) can affect eligibility requirements, and states have flexibility in determining eligibility, particularly with regard to what is considered a countable resource. In many states, individuals over the age of 18 and under the age of 50 are limited to three months of SNAP benefits every three years unless they are working or in a work or training program 20 hours a week. Some states have waivers to this rule for all or part of the state – for detailed state eligibility requirements, consult the [state SNAP agency](#).^{viii}

In West Virginia, families may apply for SNAP benefits online. Eligibility to receive benefits is based on household size, income, assets and some household expenses as determined by the federal government. Most people must pass a gross income test and then a net income test. The amount of SNAP benefits issued to eligible persons is based on household size and countable income, after all deductions are applied. There is a higher asset limit for households with a person who is disabled or a person over the age of 60. These households are also exempted from the gross income test.^{ix}

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.

West Virginia's TANF program is called WV Works. To qualify for WV Works, families must fall under size and income guidelines. Adults receiving WV Works are required to complete an orientation to learn about available activities and services and for an explanation of the 60-month lifetime limit for receipt of benefits. In addition, each adult or emancipated minor is required to negotiate a personal responsibility contract. This contract is an agreement between the applicant and DHHR which identifies goals, objectives and actions that must be taken in order to become self-sufficient. The personal responsibility contract may be renegotiated at any time; it is an ever-changing document. Within the first 45 days, a home visit will be completed by the WV WORKS Case Manager. WV WORKS also provides educational programs including assessment, vocational training, college classes, and job skills training, and education related to employment. In addition to normal benefits, cash bonuses may be awarded upon reaching certain education- or work-related milestones (e.g. acquiring a high school diploma or obtaining employment within 90 days of graduating from vocational training).^x

Other Helpful Resources

West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WVCADV)

WVCADV is a statewide network of 14 domestic violence organizations throughout West Virginia. The coalition's [website](#) provides online resources and links to domestic violence organizations by county. Organizations provide advocacy for survivors of domestic violence through safety planning, shelter, resources, and referral services. Some organizations provide batterer's intervention programs.

References

- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in West Virginia, see <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcse/parents/Documents/Pamphlets/110%20Establish%20Paternity.pdf> and <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcse/Pages/Paternity-FAQs.aspx>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on Child Custody in West Virginia, see <http://www.courts.wv.gov/lower-courts/family-forms/FC120.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 West Virginia's Child Care Program, see <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Childcare/Pages/default.aspx>.
- ^{vii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.
- ^{viii} For more information on SNAP and to find services in your state, see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>.
- ^{ix} For more information on SNAP in West Virginia, see <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/familyassistance/Pages/Supplemental-Nutritional-Assistance-Program-%28Former-Food-Stamp-Program%29.aspx>.
- ^x For more information on WV Works, see <http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/bcf/Services/familyassistance/Pages/WV-WORKS.aspx>.