



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



NRFC State Profile: Rhode Island

June 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
Child and Family	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships	Child and Family is a federally and state funded organization offering a number of programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Support for New Parents</i> - parenting groups and resources for parents with children ages newborn to three. • <i>Family-Centered Treatment (FTC)</i> - an evidence-based therapy model, provided by skilled in-home providers, for families at risk of losing their children. • <i>The Family Care Community Partnership</i> - strengthens the parent-child bond and promotes more effective communication, self-discipline, and self-respect. 	Serves the entire state. Website (401) 849-2300
Children's Friend and Service	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Incarceration	Children's Friend and Service is a state funded organization that offers the <i>Dads Making a Difference</i> program. The program provides home visits and support groups for fathers of any age, including teen fathers. Services are provided in both English and Spanish. Incarcerated fathers are eligible to participate. There are no insurance or income requirements, but priority is given to the most vulnerable families.	Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls. Website (401) 752-7600

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP)	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	<p>The state funded CCAP offers a variety of programs to help families achieve economic self-sufficiency. Programs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Parents as Teachers (PAT)</i>, which provides free, in-home visiting and parenting skill training for parents and their newborn to one-year old children. • The <i>Parent Education Program</i>, which provides general parenting training. • <i>New Opportunity Homes for Pregnant and Parenting Teens</i>, which provides housing for pregnant teen parents who can no longer live with their families. • <i>Family Care Community Partnership</i>, which provides services for children who are at risk of abuse or neglect. • <i>Healthy Families America Program - Love that Baby Campaign</i>, which helps parents better understand their children's needs from the very beginning. 	<p>Cranston, Scituate, Foster, and Coventry. Some services are statewide.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(401) 467-9610</p>
Community Care Alliance	Fatherhood/Parenting	<p>The state funded Community Care Alliance provides early childhood parenting support, family care community partnership, and educational support for parenting teens.</p>	<p>Woonsocket.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(401) 235-7000</p>
Family Service of Rhode Island	Fatherhood/Parenting	<p>The state and federally funded Family Service of Rhode Island offers parenting support services for vulnerable families. Programs include <i>Healthy Families Rhode Island</i>, a home visiting program for expectant families or families with young children, and <i>Helping Troubled Families</i>, an intervention program for families with children or youth at risk of involvement with the Department of Children, Youth and Families.</p>	<p><i>Healthy Families Rhode Island</i> serves Providence and West Warwick.</p> <p><i>Helping Troubled Families</i> serves the Urban Core (Providence/Cranston/Pawtucket/Central Falls) and the West Bay Regions.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(401) 331-1350</p>



Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Federal Hill House	Fatherhood/Parenting	Federal Hill House's <i>Bundles of Joy</i> program provides information and resources for young families in need. The program provides free baby clothes, toys, books, diapers, formula, and other items. Federal Hill House receives state funding for its programs.	Providence. Website (401) 421-4722
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.	The Job Corp center is located in Exeter. Website (401) 268-6000
netWORKri Centers	Economic Stability	netWORKri centers are federally funded and provide a free database of jobs, employment opportunities, and training opportunities. Information is accessible online. Users can use the site to post resumes and apply for jobs. Workshops are available at career centers with a focus on key job search skills, such as resume writing and interviewing.	Providence, West Warwick, Woonsocket, and Wakefield. Website with phone numbers.
OpenDoors	Fatherhood/Parenting Reentry	OpenDoors, a state and federally funded organization, helps formerly incarcerated individuals reintegrate back into their communities. Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discharge planning.• Policy and advocacy on criminal justice issues.• One-stop resource centers.• Employment services.	Serves the entire state. Website (401) 781-5808
Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence (RICADV)	Domestic Violence	RICADV provides domestic violence prevention initiatives, including <i>Ten Men</i> , which engages RI men as community leaders to spread awareness about domestic violence.	Serves the entire state. Website (401) 467-9940
Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC), Reentry Services Unit	Fatherhood/Parenting Reentry Domestic Violence Economic Stability	RIDOC provides programming to ease the transition for former inmates reintegrating into their communities. RIDOC offers individualized treatment plans including batterers' intervention programming, parenting classes, and interventions for domestic violence. The transitional services include a one-stop resource center where former inmates can receive help with receiving public benefits and state and local services.	Serves the entire state. Website (401) 462-1000

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN)	Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	State and federally funded RIPIN uses a family-centered approach to encourage educational and socioeconomic well-being, as well as increased personal health. RIPIN offers workshops on parenting, and seminars known as <i>MEGASKILLS</i> , which emphasize how good behaviors begin at home.	Serves the entire state. Workshops and classes are located in Cranston. Website (401) 270-0101
Sojourner House	Healthy Relationships Domestic Violence	The state and federally funded Sojourner House provides services to victims of domestic violence, including male victims. Services include support groups and safe housing tailored for the experiences of male victims. Fathers can also participate in general support groups offered by Sojourner House.	Serves the entire state. Website (401) 861-6191 Helpline: (401) 765-3232
University of Rhode Island (URI)	Healthy Relationships Fatherhood/Parenting	The URI Couple and Family Therapy Clinic offers family and relationship therapy. Groups and classes include <i>S.T.E.P. (Systematic Training for Effective Parenting)</i> , which focuses on parenting topics; <i>Active Parenting</i> , a 6-8 session workshop focused on how to raise responsible kids; and <i>123 Magic</i> , which teaches parents how to redirect misbehavior, while promoting stronger parent-child relationships.	Serves the entire state. The clinic is located in Kingston. Website (401) 874-5956

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 Rhode Island, an unmarried father may voluntarily acknowledge paternity either at the hospital immediately after a child's birth, or later at the Office of Child Support Services. Trained staff explain the voluntary process and provide informational material with information about parental rights and responsibilities. If the father signs an affidavit of paternity, his name will be added to the child's birth certificate.

If an alleged father does not wish to voluntarily acknowledge paternity, the Office of Child Support Services can file a Complaint for Paternity, naming the alleged father as the parent. The mother would have to sign a verified complaint

and an affidavit stating facts that support that the individual is the father. The father can respond by one of three ways: 1) answering the affidavit and requesting a DNA test, 2) admitting he is the father, at which point a motion is filed to add the father to the child's birth certificate, or 3) not answering, at which point the court will default to find he is the father of the child, and a motion will be filed to establish child support. If a DNA test is requested, the state receives results in about 30 days.ⁱ The cost of the test is \$200.00, which is initially paid for by the State; if the putative father's paternity is confirmed, he will be required to reimburse the state for the fee. Depending on the results, the court will either dismiss the case or file a motion to adjudicate the father; if the case is dismissed, the alleged father is not required to reimburse the state for the DNA test's cost.

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 Rhode Island, custody and visitation are determined by the RI Family Court based on the best interests of the child if the parents cannot agree to legal custody, physical placement, and/or visitation rights. The court will create a custody arrangement that includes joint or sole legal custody, and shared or sole physical custody. Rhode Island law provides that reasonable visitation should be granted to noncustodial parents in almost all circumstances. In determining visitation schedules, courts consider factors such as the child's age, the geographic distance between parents, parents' work schedules, and any special considerations or difficulties. In cases of actual or alleged abuse, courts may restrict visitation or require supervised 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 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

In Rhode Island, child support orders are established through the Family Court. The Office of Child Support Services, in the Department of Human Services, facilitates this process on behalf of custodial parents who apply for an order, and for families receiving public benefits. Both parents are called as witnesses at a family court hearing to set a child support order. The court will consider the weekly gross income of both parents before taxes and before any other deductions, including mandatory deductions and child care expenses. The court then uses a guideline chart that recommends a certain amount of monthly child support based on the parents' combined adjusted gross income and the number of children that the parents have together. The court also determines medical coverage or a cash medical order. Go to the [website](#) or call (410) 458-4400 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}

In addition to the benefits allowed by the federal FMLA, Rhode Island requires that all public employers with at least 30 employees and all private employers with at least 50 employees provide up to 13 weeks of unpaid leave in any 24-month period. This leave can be used for the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from an illness, or to care for an ill family member. In addition, the Rhode Island Temporary Caregiver Insurance Program provides four weeks of paid leave for the birth, adoption or fostering of a new child, or to care for an ill family member. The state also provides unpaid leave of up to 10 hours per year to participate in children's educational activities.^v

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 Rhode Island, 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.^{vi}

Child care assistance is provided for families who meet Rhode Island's guidelines for low-income individuals. This includes those who 1) are making at or above minimum wage, and are working a minimum of 20 hours per week; 2) are participating in the RI Works program; or 3) are a pregnant or parenting teen participating in the DHS' Youth Success Program.^{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}

Rhode Island 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](#).^x

In Rhode Island, families may qualify for SNAP if their income is less than 185 percent of Federal Poverty Level. Families may qualify to receive SNAP at a faster rate, within 7 days, if their expenses are higher than their income or if they are a seasonal farm or migrant worker. All other applicants will receive notification of their eligibility for SNAP within 30 days of applying.^{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.

In Rhode Island, TANF is called Rhode Island Works. When receiving benefits, most parents must participate in work activities. Generally, parents first create an individual employment plan and embark on a job search. Parents may also participate in on-the-job training, community service, and education directly related to employment. In two-parent families, one parent must work or prepare for work for at least 35 hours per week. If the family uses a childcare subsidy, both parents must work or prepare for work a total of 55 hours per week. Single parents must work or prepare for work for an average of 20 or 30 hours per week depending on the age of the youngest child. Cash payments are dependent on the size of the family, but payment is reduced if the family is also receiving subsidized housing assistance. Health care is not provided as part of Rhode Island Works, but applicants are often eligible for coverage under Medicaid.^x

References

ⁱ For more information on paternity establishment in Rhode Island, see http://www.cse.ri.gov/services/establishment_paternity.php.

ⁱⁱ For more information on child custody in Rhode Island, <http://www.tjcesq.com/CM/Custom/TOCChildCustodyandChildSupport.asp> and <http://www.prlog.org/10574605-thebasics-of-joint-custody-sole-custody-and-physical-custody-in-rhode-island-ri-by-lawyer.html/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css.

^{iv} For more information on the Family Medical Leave Act, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.pdf>.

^v For more information on family leave laws in Rhode Island, see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/state/fmla/ri.htm>.

^{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 child care in Rhode Island, see <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/Programs/CCAPProgramInfo.php>.

^{viii} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.

^{ix} For more information on SNAP in Rhode Island, see <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/Programs/SNAPEligibility.php>.

^x To learn more about TANF in Rhode Island, see <http://www.dhs.ri.gov/Programs/RIWorksProgramInformation.php>.