



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



NRFC State Profile: New Jersey 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
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton	Fatherhood/Parenting Healthy Relationships Domestic Violence	The federally funded Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton provides several strengthening families and domestic violence services. Programs include parenting, anger-management, healthy marriage classes, parenting education workshops, addictions intervention services for parents, supervised visitation services, and support and education for parents with mental illness. Domestic violence services include a 24-hour hotline, counseling education, children's programs, legal advocacy, and a no-cost safe house for victims and their children.	Burlington, Mercer County, and Ocean Counties. Website with locations and phone numbers.

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Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
Department of Children and Families' Division on Women, Office of Domestic Violence Services (ODVS)	Domestic Violence	<p>ODVS funds 23 domestic violence programs in New Jersey. Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24-hour hotline. • 24-hour access to a confidential safe house. • Counseling, support services, and advocacy for victims and children. • Legal, financial, and housing advocacy. • Community education and networking. <p>ODVS also offers several county programs, including Batterer's Intervention Programs and treatment programs for domestic violence survivors.</p>	<p>Serves the entire state.</p> <p>Website of programs and services by county.</p> <p>Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 572-SAFE (7233)</p>
Job Corps	Economic Stability	<p>Job Corps is a federal job training program to help low-income young men and women ages 16 to 24 with educational and career goals.</p>	<p>There is one Job Corps center in New Jersey. It is located in Edison.</p> <p>Website (732) 985-4800</p>
New Jersey Department of Corrections (DOC), Division of Programs and Community Services	Incarceration/Reentry Healthy Relationships Fatherhood/Parenting Economic Stability	<p>New Jersey DOC offers programs to help fathers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance parenting skills while incarcerated and after release. • Reconnect with family after release. • Build positive relationships. • Find employment, housing, transportation, and education after release. • Learn about anger management. • Improve job retention and communication skills retention. • Participate in work-release programs that assist with GED and vocational training. 	<p>New Jersey correctional facilities. Website with phone numbers.</p>
New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development	Economic Stability	<p>Funded by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, New Jersey's <i>One-Stop Career Centers</i> offer free services and resources such as career counseling, job matching, job-search assistance, and job readiness workshops.</p>	<p>There are 21 centers in New Jersey.</p> <p>Website with locations and phone numbers.</p>

Organization	Services Provided	Description	Service Area and Contact Information
<p>Parents Anonymous of New Jersey, Inc.</p>	<p>Fatherhood/Parenting</p>	<p>The state funded Parents Anonymous of New Jersey, Inc., is a family strengthening program that provides weekly support groups for parents and their children. The program focuses on strengthening protective factors, reducing risk, and empowering families to create positive long-term changes. Parents Anonymous also provides <i>Father Time</i>, a 12-week program that uses the 24/7 DADS curriculum with an added support group program. Parents can call the New Jersey Parent Helpline for emotional support between weekly Parents Anonymous Groups.</p>	<p>Centers are located in Hamilton and East Orange.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(609) 585-7666</p> <p>Help Line:</p> <p>(800) 843-5437</p>
<p>The New Jersey Department of Children and Families</p>	<p>Fatherhood/Parenting</p>	<p>The New Jersey Department of Children and Families funds several statewide Family Support Services. <i>Family Success Centers</i> are a network of “one-stop” centers providing parent education, economic self-sufficiency and employment services, life skills training such as budgeting and nutrition, primary and secondary child abuse prevention services, and access to parenting and family health resources. <i>Family Support Organizations</i> are county-based and provide direct family-to-family peer support, education, advocacy, and other services for family members of children with emotional and behavioral problems.</p>	<p>Serves the entire state.</p> <p>Website with <i>Family Success Centers</i> and phone numbers by county.</p> <p>Website with <i>Family Support Organizations</i> and phone numbers by county.</p>
<p>Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc.</p>	<p>Fatherhood/Parenting</p>	<p>The state and federally funded Statewide Parent Advocacy Network, Inc. is a "one stop shop" offering advocacy, resources, and support to help with :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective parent involvement. • Child care. • General and special education. • Dropout and bullying prevention. • Child welfare. • Health care and mental health. • Transition to adult life. • Incarcerated youth. • Military family support. • Violence prevention. 	<p>Serves the entire state. Programs offered vary by county.</p> <p>Website</p> <p>(973) 642-8100</p>

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 New Jersey, paternity can be established 1) voluntarily, 2) through voluntary genetic testing, and 3) through court-ordered genetic testing. To voluntarily establish paternity, parents can sign a Certificate of Parentage (COP) at the hospital after the child's birth, or after leaving the hospital at their local Registrar or County Welfare Agency (CWA) office. If a parent does not agree that the child is theirs, both parents may voluntarily undergo genetic testing. Either parent may request the test. If either parent is unwilling, the parent may be ordered by the county office or court to take the test. Teen parents have the right to voluntarily establish paternity without the consent of a parent or legal guardian.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 New Jersey, parents who are divorced, separated, or never-married and have a child custody dispute are required by law to participate in a three-hour Parent Education Program.ⁱⁱ Parents involved in custody disputes may also be ordered to participate in mediation for up to two months. If mediation is not successful, the court will make a decision after the Family Division investigates 1) the character and fitness of both parents, 2) the economic condition of the family, 3) the financial ability of each parent to pay alimony and/or child support, 4) the parents' homes, taking into consideration where the child will stay, safety precautions, number of household members and their relationship to the child, and 5) criminal records of both parents. Any character recommendations of the parties must be made by a qualified mental health professional.ⁱⁱⁱ

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.^{iv}

The New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, Office of Child Support Services administers child support programs by individual county. Starting on February 1, 2017, child support payments will cease when the dependent reaches 19 years of age, although this cessation may be delayed up to age 23 for cases in which the dependent is still in high school; attending full-time college, vocational or graduate school; is disabled; if the parties reached a separate agreement; or if continued support was granted by the court. Go to the [website](#) or call (877) NJKIDS1 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.^v

In addition to FMLA, the New Jersey Family and Medical Leave requires employers with at least 50 employees to allow eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of leave in any 24-month period to care for a newborn, newly adopted child, or family member with a serious health condition. This includes parents-in-law and partners in a civil union. Employees are eligible if they have worked for the employer for at least one year and at least 1,000 hours in the past 12 months.

Domestic Violence Leave in New Jersey requires employers with at least 25 employees to allow employees time off if they or a family member has been a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault. Employees may take up to 20 days of leave in a 12-month period. Employees are eligible if they have worked for the employer for at least one year and at least 1,000 hours in the past 12 months.

New Jersey also has Temporary Disability Insurance and Paid Family Leave, which pays eligible employees who are temporarily unable to work due to disability (including pregnancy) up to two-thirds of their usual wages. Eligible employees may collect the same benefits available for temporary disabilities for up to six weeks to care for a seriously ill family member or to bond with a new child.^{vi}

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 New Jersey, 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.^{vii}

In New Jersey, families who earn up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level and have never been on welfare can receive child care subsidies under the New Jersey Cares for Kids program. After one year, a family remains eligible with

an income up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level. Subsidies cover child care, including preschool, after-school programs for children up to age 13, and care for children and teens with special needs. Subsidized care may be provided under contracts between the state and licensed child care centers or through voucher certificates, which allow parents to choose a child care program. The vouchers can be used for a variety of child care, such as licensed centers and registered family day care homes.

Children whose families receive cash assistance under the state welfare program, WorkFirst NJ, are entitled to free child care. Former WorkFirst NJ participants receive subsidized child care for up to two years after moving from welfare to work. Those clients make a small co-payment which varies based on family size and income.^{viii}

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.^{ix}

In New Jersey, the State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP) provides tenant-based and project-based rental assistance grants comparable to the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program. A household or individual cannot receive federal and state rental assistance at the same time. The rental subsidy under the State Rental Assistance Program will be for up to five years; less, if a Housing Choice Voucher becomes available.^x

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

New Jersey has no additional state provisions for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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.

New Jersey's welfare program, Work First New Jersey (WFNJ), provides low-income families temporary cash assistance and other support services to help them secure employment and become self-sufficient. Individuals and couples with no dependent children can also receive cash assistance and support services through the General Assistance program.^{xi}

Other Helpful Resources

The New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development, Office of Child Support Services provides a [Directory of Fatherhood Programs in New Jersey](#).

References

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- ⁱ For more information on Paternity Establishment in New Jersey, see <http://www.njchildsupport.org/Services-Programs/Custodial-Parents/Custodial-Parents/Establishing-paternity.aspx>.
- ⁱⁱ For more information on the Parent Education Program, see <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/essex/csguide/family.html>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ For more information on Child Custody in New Jersey, see <http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/rules/r5-8.html>.
- ^{iv} For more information on the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, see www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css.
- ^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 leave programs in New Jersey, see <http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/new-jersey-family-medical-leave.html>.
- ^{vii} For more information on the Child Care and Development Fund, see <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/about/what-we-do>.
- ^{viii} For more information on Child Care Assistance in New Jersey, see <http://www.nj.gov/humanservices/dfd/programs/child/subsidies/>.
- ^{ix} For more information on Rental Assistance, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/topics/rental_assistance.
- ^x For more information on New Jersey's State Rental Assistance Program, see <http://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/srap.html>.
- ^{xi} For more information about WFNJ, see <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/programs/workfirstnj/>.