



Fatherhood
Research
& Practice
Network

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Tracking State
Policies on
Fathers to
Improve Policy
Development
and Equity

February 24, 2022

Today's Webinar Participants

- Jessica Pearson
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- Shaneen Moore
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Policies and Programs Affecting Fathers: A State-by-State Report

- Information on policies and programs that support the engagement of fathers, especially low-income and nonresident fathers, with their children in the 50 states and the District of Columbia
- Ten areas of public life:
 - Child Support
 - Child Welfare
 - Criminal Justice
 - Early Childhood
 - Education
 - Employment
 - Family Law
 - Food and Housing
 - Health and Mental Health
 - Responsible Fatherhood
- Objectives:
 - Establish a baseline
 - Highlight barriers
 - Provide a “roadmap”
 - Stimulate better measurement
 - Inspire research
 - Identify supportive state policies

Why Focus on State Approaches to Including Fathers in Policies and Programs?

- Children with positively involved fathers have better child well-being outcomes
- Low-income, nonresident fathers face many barriers to positive engagement with their children
- Fathers are not addressed in other major policy assessments for children (e.g., Kids Count, the State of America's Children)
- Existing national "report cards" on father involvement focus on joint custody/shared parenting (e.g., Nat'l Parent Org.)
- Many state-level policies can directly and indirectly encourage and discourage father involvement
- States can help to fund (e.g., TANF), access funding (e.g., 1115s) and create programs and policies to support fathers and their children

Child Support Policies and Programs that Affect Fathers

- Low-income adjustment or SSR
 - At or above poverty (26 states & DC – 53%)
 - Below poverty (22 states – 43%)
 - Not specified (2 states – 4%)
- Interest charged on unpaid child support
 - None (20 states & DC – 41%)
 - 2%-9% (15 states – 29%)
 - 10%-12% (6 states – 12%)
 - Market factors (5 states – 10%)
 - Not charged/collected (4 states – 8%)
- Modification threshold for child support orders
 - 10% change from order or guideline (8 states – 16%)
 - 15% change from order or guideline (15 states & DC – 31%)
 - 20%-25% change from order or guideline (11 states – 22%)
 - 20% change in income (2 states – 4%)
 - Substantial change (14 states – 27%)

Child Support Policies and Programs that Affect Fathers

- Pass through policy
 - Yes (26 states & DC – 53%)
 - None (24 states – 57%)
 - *100% (1 state – 2%)
- Work-oriented programs for NCPs
 - Statewide (13 states – 25%)
 - Select jurisdictions (18 states & DC – 37%)
 - None (19 states – 37%)
- Debt compromise policy
 - Yes (45 states & DC – 90%)
 - None (5 states – 10%)
 - *Robust program (10 states & DC – 22%)

Child Welfare Policies and Programs that Affect Fathers

- Above 50% nat'l average on Child and Family Service Reviews
 - Promoting positive father-child relationships (29 states – 58%)
 - Assessing and addressing fathers needs (15 states – 29%)
 - Involving fathers in case planning (22 states – 43%)
- Child and Family Service Plans that mention
 - Staff training on father engagement (20 states – 39%)
 - Staff specialist or contractor on fathers (4 states – 8%)
 - Parenting skills or fatherhood classes (17 states – 33%)
 - Fatherhood councils/committees (12 states – 24%)
- Other father engagement activity
 - Participation in federal demonstration grants (7 states – 14%)
 - Children's Trust programs on fatherhood (11 states – 22%)
 - Approved FFPSA plans mention fathers/paternity (5 states – 10%)

Criminal Justice Policies and Programs that Affect Fathers

- Grade on pardon practice
 - A/B (18 states – 35%)
 - C/D (9 states – 18%)
 - F (23 states & DC – 47%)
- Felony and misdemeanor relief
 - Broader felony and misdemeanor relief (14 states – 27%)
 - Automatic expungement/sealing some convictions (12 states – 24%)
 - Clean Slate legislation enacted or in process (10 states – 20%)
 - Marijuana relief (24 states & DC – 49%)
- Diversion
 - Broadly available (19 states – 37%)
 - Varying restrictions (16 states – 31%)
 - Specialized cases (13 states & DC – 27%)
 - No provision (2 states – 4%)

Criminal Justice Policies and Programs that Affect Fathers

- Non-conviction relief
 - Automatic record sealing (18 states – 35%)
 - Simple court petition required (12 states – 24%)
 - More burdensome court petition required (11 states – 22%)
 - Process not applicable or other (6 states – 12%)
- Employment regulation
 - Ban the Box laws apply for public and private (18 states & DC – 37%)
 - Ban the Box laws apply for public only (18 states – 35%)
 - No regulation of public or private (14 states – 27%)
- Occupational licensing
 - Robust (11 states – 22%)
 - Adequate (9 states – 18%)
 - Modest (16 states – 31%)
 - Minimally acceptable (10 states & DC – 22%)
 - None (4 states – 8%)

Criminal Justice Policies and Programs that Affect Fathers

- Policies enacted to reduce parole and probation revocations
 - 6-8 reform policies (8 states – 16%)
 - 4-5 policies (12 states – 24%)
 - 1-3 policies (15 states – 29%)
 - None (15 states – 29%)
- Parenting and incarceration
 - Legislation to consider parenting during sentencing/facility selection (7 states – 14%)
 - Offer parenting classes for fathers at every DOC facility (20 states & DC – 41%)
 - Offer parenting classes for fathers at some DOC facilities (10 states – 20%)

Conclusions

- Few direct policies for low-income fathers can be measured in every state, many indirect ones can be
- Most states lack supportive policies
- State performance isn't consistent within a single area of public life (e.g., child support) or across areas (e.g., child welfare and criminal justice)
- Interested states can find many examples of strong policy and programs in other states to adopt
- Knowing where we stand helps us make progress
- Measurement and tracking are first steps in policy improvement

Questions for Panelists

- What are your initial reactions to the measures that we have selected in each of these areas and to the state patterns that we have identified?
- How should practitioners and stakeholders use this information to try to make state policy more responsive to fathers?
- How can this type of information be expanded upon or be more impactful?

Questions



Resources and Speaker Contact Information

Pearson, J. and Wildfeuer, R. (2022). *Policies and Programs Affecting Fathers: A State-by-State Report*. Center for Policy Research & Fatherhood Research and Practice Network.

- Chapters 1-4 are available now at www.frpn.org
- Future chapters will be released over the next several months

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