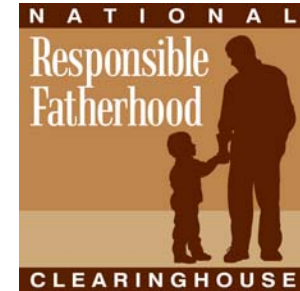




U.S. Department of Health
and Human Services
Administration for Children
and Families
Office of Family Assistance

Responsible Fatherhood State Profile: New Mexico

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www.fatherhood.gov

New Mexico

Strategies Intended to Promote Healthy Marriage

State-Funded Marriage Promotion Activities

In 2007, the New Mexico State Legislature authorized state funding for programs to support healthy marriages and families. Specifically, funds were granted to create programs in Rio Rancho and Albuquerque.ⁱ

Other Marriage Initiatives

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has given New Mexico several grants to promote healthy marriage. The New Mexico Couples Forming Community Healthy Marriage Initiative Demonstration Project provides relationship skills education, mentoring for successful couples, and professional assistance to married and engaged couples. The All My Relations program targets American Indian couples and promotes strong relationships and marriages. The ACF also funds a program that New Mexico State University implements—the New Mexico Healthy Marriage Initiative. This project offers pre-marital education and marriage skills training.ⁱⁱ The ACF also supports the New Mexico Family Council that operates programs to promote strong marriages and families. One example is New Mexico Marriages First, a program that focuses on marital and pre-marital initiatives.ⁱⁱⁱ

Strategies Intended to Promote Parenting and Responsible Fatherhood

State-Funded Direct Service Parenting/Responsible Fatherhood Programs

The Youth Development, Inc. runs the Fatherhood Initiative, a program that teaches parenting skills to fathers of children enrolled in Head Start programs.^{iv} Head Start programs in New Mexico are also dedicated to involving fathers in their children's lives.^v New Mexico also uses state and federal funding from the New Mexico State Department of Health and the US Department of Health and Human Services for the New Mexico Young Fathers Program. This project provides support to young fathers and helps them with parenting skills, education, and job opportunities.

State-Funded Programs to Prevent Unwanted or Early Fatherhood

New Mexico uses state and federal funds for teen pregnancy prevention programs. The ACF supports the GRADS program—Graduation Reality and Dual-Role Skills. This initiative targets teen parents and aims to delay subsequent pregnancies, improve parenting skills, create healthy relationships, and prepare teens for jobs and economic self-sufficiency.^{vi}

Take Time to Be a Dad Today

The Family and Medical Leave Act

New Mexico is subject to the federal Family of Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), which requires employers with 50 or more employees to offer up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to parents upon the birth or adoption of a child, to recover from an illness, or to care for an ill family member. The FMLA protects fathers and mothers who have worked with the same organization for at least one year and have worked at least 1,250 hours in the past year. The New Mexico FMLA also contains a provision that public employees may use an unlimited amount of accumulated sick leave to care for sick family members.^{vii}

Domestic Violence Services

The New Mexico Coalition Against Domestic Violence is dedicated to the victims of domestic violence and working to end this violence. The work of this organization includes coalition building at the state and local level, support for safe home and shelter programs, public education, technical assistance, and policy development.^{viii} In 2007, the New Mexico State Legislature authorized money for the creation of a Victims of Crime Act position to help prosecute domestic violence cases, a domestic violence prevention program, before and after school programs to educate students about domestic violence, and the creation of new shelters for victims statewide.^{ix} In 2006, the Albuquerque Community Foundation authorized a grant to the Enlace Comunitario program to provide counseling, supervision, life skills training, and parenting classes to Spanish speaking immigrants who are victims of domestic violence.^x

Child Custody Policy

A court decides child custody in disputed cases in New Mexico. The court determines custody by considering the best interest of the child. In most cases, joint custody is presumed to be the best interest of the child unless shown otherwise. If the child is over 14, his/her wishes are also taken into account.^{xi}

Paternity Establishment

Children born to unwed parents do not automatically have a legal father. Establishing paternity is important so that the child can have the same guaranteed rights as a child with married parents. These rights include social security, health insurance, veteran's benefits, inheritance, and child support. In New Mexico, the father can sign an acknowledgement of paternity in the hospital at the time of birth. The Child Support Enforcement Division can order genetic testing to determine the paternity of a child if the father does not willfully acknowledge paternity.^{xii} Paternity can be established up to the child's 21st birthday.^{xiii}

Child Support Assistance

New Mexico's Child Support Enforcement Program can help families in finding noncustodial parents, establishing paternity, establishing and enforcing support orders, and collecting and distributing child support payments.^{xiv} If the family receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, child support enforcement services are free.^{xv}



Child Support Enforcement

The Child Support Enforcement Program collects child support from noncustodial parents and has as its primary goal to maximize child support payments for New Mexico children. All support orders include a provision for wage withholding so that child support payments are guaranteed to be made. If the noncustodial parent still refuses to pay child support, the state can revoke the parent's occupational or professional license, suspend his/her driver's license, use his/her tax refund, or refer the case for federal prosecution.^{xvi}

Strategies Intended to Enhance Fathers' Economic Stability

Welfare Benefits

New Mexico provides Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds for low-income families. TANF also provides services for low-income families such as job training, education, and childcare. The New Mexico Works program provides assistance to needy families while helping parents with job training and promoting marriage.^{xvii} The Insure Mexico! initiative offers affordable health insurance to eligible low-income working adults.^{xviii}

Services Geared Toward Low-Income Noncustodial Fathers

Some TANF funds are targeted at low-income noncustodial fathers to help them find employment.^{xix} The New Mexico Guardianship Project provides legal and social services to children with noncustodial parents.^{xx}

Job Training and Employment Services

The Department of Corrections manages the SOAR program—Success for Offenders After Release—that helps with job training placement after prisoners' release from prison.^{xxi}

Incarceration and Reentry

Services and Programs for Incarcerated Fathers

The ACF funds a program for incarcerated fathers at the Southern NM Correctional Facility. The Promoting Responsible Fatherhood project provides parenting and life skills education, distributes information on domestic violence, mails projects to inmates' families, sponsors Family Day events, and distributes statewide newsletters.^{xxii} New Mexico State University manages the Strengthening Families Initiative that provides parenting classes to high-risk parents and especially targets incarcerated parents.^{xxiii}

Resources

- **New Mexico Human Services Department.** This Web site provides an overview of state services and policies for families; available at <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/>
- **Administration for Children and Families.** This Web site details grants from the Office of Family Assistance for Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood by different regions; available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/hmabstracts/index.htm>

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