



Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009

Introduced in Congress June 19, 2009 (*information current as of July 2009*)

Authors/Sponsors: S.1309, Sen. Evan Bayh (Indiana), and 3 co-sponsors Sen. Lincoln (Arkansas), Sen. Burris (Illinois), and Sen. Johnson (South Dakota). H.R.2979, Rep. Danny Davis (Illinois) and 27 co-sponsors.

Key Facts: Identical to the bill introduced in the Senate last year by Sen. Bayh and then Sen. Obama (originally introduced in 2006). Contains healthy marriage, responsible fatherhood and healthy family partnership grants; makes changes to the child support program and restores funding; increases employment programs; increases noncustodial parent Earned Income Tax Credit; makes changes to the interaction between SNAP [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly Food Stamps], TANF [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, formerly AFDC] and child support paid or received; and creates state policy review commissions.

Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Grants (first est. in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005):

- Increases program funding to \$200 million/yr (up from \$150 million), with the responsible fatherhood grant set-aside to \$100 million/yr (up from \$50 million)
- Expands allowable fatherhood activities to include: (i) promoting healthy relationships and marriages, (ii) “educating youth who are not yet parents about the economic, social, and family consequences of early parenting, helping participants in fatherhood programs work with their own children to break the cycle of early parenthood”, and (iii) extends activities to all low-income noncustodial parents
- Creates new **Healthy Family Partnership Grants** available for domestic violence prevention and intervention to partner agencies, defined as those receiving funds to promote healthy marriage or responsible fatherhood who work with organizations with demonstrated expertise in working with survivors of domestic violence. Funds can be used for assessments, providing services, technical assistance, and implementation of safe visitation and exchange programs – 10% of funds must go to high schools and higher education for education services for teaching healthy relationships, responsible parenting, importance of non-violence, etc. Also adds section addressing required agency procedures to address domestic violence prevention.

Changes to Child Support:

- Funding – restores cuts made in the Deficit Reduction Act to federal child support funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 only temporarily restored the funds until Sept. 30, 2010)
- Fees – repeals the annual \$25 parental service fee enacted by the Deficit Reduction Act for families who have never received TANF and receive at least \$500/yr in child support
- Money to families - eliminates the TANF assignment and requires full distribution to current and former TANF recipients, requires TANF disregard equal to earned income disregard (to ensure that child support payments to families do not count as income and result in loss of food stamps), requires foster care collections to be used in the best interests of the child
- Other provisions – states cannot recoup Medicaid-covered birth costs through child support, states cannot treat incarceration as “voluntary unemployment”, states must have procedures to review and, if appropriate, reduce child support debt assigned to the state

Increased Employment Programs:

- Creates grants to states through Health and Human Services for **Court Supervised or IV-D (child support) Supervised Employment Programs** for noncustodial parents (NCPs) with barriers to employment, a history of nonpayment of child support obligations, and need of employment services to pay child support, this includes ex-offenders. Goals include helping NCPs maintain unsubsidized employment, increase child support and improve NCPs’ relationships with their kids and their children’s custodial parent.
- Creates grants to states through Department of Labor for **Transitional Jobs** for individuals age 16 – 35 who fall into categories that are disproportionately chronically unemployed (lack high school diploma, limited English proficiency, aged out of foster care, offender status, e.g.) and particularly for parents or expectant parents. Goals include combining temporary, subsidized jobs with skill development and barrier removal for 30-40 hours/wk.



- Creates grants to states through Department of Labor for Public-Private **Career Pathways Partnership Grants** to serve priority areas with high rates of poverty, youth unemployment, drop out, or low income single parent families. Goals include performance-based partnerships intended to create or expand career pathways with employers in specific industry or occupational sectors and to fill in gaps with “bridge” programs.

Noncustodial Parent Earned Income Tax Credit:

- Expands the EITC for workers with no qualifying children and creates enhanced credit for noncustodial parents supporting their children (those current on child support with IV-D case)

State Policy Review Commissions:

- As a condition of their IV-D plan with the federal government, states must assess policy barriers to employment and financial support of children, including the process of setting and modifying child support obligations, particularly for low-income parents, the treatment of arrearages, impact of state criminal laws and law enforcement practices on employability, impact of debt on employment retention, state practices related to providing prisoners and ex-prisoners with valid identification documents upon release and any other barriers to healthy family formation or sustainable economic opportunity for both parents
- Creates grants to states through Health and Human Services to establish or support commissions to make the state assessments described above and to make recommendations on ways to improve State law in the best interests of children and families, and appropriates \$3 million

Food Stamps (now SNAP) and TANF:

- 20 percent food stamp deduction for child support received
- Noncustodial parent households can claim a food stamp deduction or exclusion for child support paid
- Prohibits unequal treatment of two-parent families receiving TANF, ensuring the state work participation standard is the same for all families

Protecting Adoption and Promoting Responsible Fatherhood Act of 2009

Introduced in Congress April 30, 2009 (*information current as of July 2009*)

Authors/Sponsors: S.939, Sen. Landrieu (Louisiana). Currently no House companion.

Key Facts: A bill to establish national and State Putative Father Registries and to make grants to States to promote permanent families for children and responsible fatherhood.

- **Establishes an automated National Putative Father Registry** (state registry information gets transmitted to the national registry) and establishes requirements for State Putative Father Registries, including that states establish centers so that registry information is easily accessible to putative fathers, such as hospitals, welfare agencies, etc.
- **Directs the Secretary to establish a nationwide responsible fatherhood and putative father registry educational campaign** designed to: (1) inform men about the National Putative Father Registry, the advantages of registering with a State Putative Father Registry, and the rights and responsibilities of putative fathers; and (2) inform women about the National Registry and its potential role in a pending or planned adoption or a termination of a putative fathers’ rights.
- **Directs the Secretary to make grants to states to assist in developing, establishing, and operating programs** designed to (1) improve the protection of the rights of responsible unwed fathers in legal proceedings related to adoption, termination of fathers’ rights or entry of child into state welfare system; (2) improve the laws and regulations involving the pre-birth and post-birth abandonment of a child by a biological father; (3) assist mothers in making responsible plans for their children’s future; and (4) protect the privacy and safety of birth mothers and fathers. To be eligible for grants, states must have established or agree to establish a State Putative Father Registry and agree to certain other provisions.