Fatherhood in Texas

The state of Texas recognizes the important role that fathers play in the lives of their children and families. Involved fatherhood is linked to better outcomes on nearly every measure of child wellbeing from cognitive and emotional development and academic success, to reduced delinquency and improved mental health. Texas also understands that fathers’ needs are often distinct from those of mothers and other family members. Father-specific supports in Texas feature an array of services, including state-funded programs and local initiatives designed to increase fathers’ economic self-sufficiency and improve their parenting knowledge and skills.

Texas agencies provide a range of services and programs to fathers and their families:

**Interagency Collaboration**
- Annual Texas Fatherhood Summit
- Texas Fatherhood Interagency Council

More than 70 local programs and groups support fathers:

**Local Leaders**
- Fatherhood Coalition of Tarrant County
- San Antonio Fatherhood Campaign
- Central Texas Fatherhood Coalition

But there are gaps to provide fathers the full range of services they need

At the state level...
- No official body exists to promote comprehensive policies and services for fathers
- Greater coordination of agency efforts to support fathers is needed
- Fathers are not accurately identified and counted in social services to ensure their needs are met
- Noncustodial parents need more options to manage child support arrears
- Social services and programs focus mostly on mothers and children, not fathers

Local programs...
- Are mostly concentrated in urban areas
- Meet some, but not all of fathers’ needs
- Are disconnected from one another

Where do we go from here?

Establish a formal, state-level council to support fatherhood to:

- Provide guidance on policies and laws
- Create and share resources for policymakers and fatherhood program providers on research and best practices
- Support programming and new initiatives
- Share a publicly accessible clearinghouse of programs and resources for program providers and fathers
- Facilitate state and regional networks for fatherhood stakeholders

List of Texas agency programs and services that support fathers on back
How Texas agencies are supporting fathers through policies, programs, and services:

**Future, Expectant, and New Parents**

- Office of the Attorney General (OAG) Parenting and Paternity Awareness (p.a.p.a.) program at all public middle and high schools, including Texas Juvenile Justice Department state-operated facilities
- Department of State Health Services Healthy Texas Babies
- Health and Human Services Commission WIC Peer Dad Program
- Department of Family and Protective Services Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) Texas Home Visiting
- PEI Safe Babies

**Support throughout the Child’s Life**

- Texas Child Protective Services Responsible Fathering Initiative
- Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) child care assistance
- Texas Education Agency Start Smart Texas
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED)
- PEI
  - Fatherhood EFFECT
  - Military Families and Veteran Pilot Prevention Program
  - Help through Intervention and Prevention (HIP)
  - Healthy Outcomes through Prevention and Supports (HOPES)
  - Home-Visiting Education and Leadership (HEAL)
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
  - Partners with local organizations to provide parenting and coparenting programs to incarcerated parents at select sites
  - Holds annual Family Days for offenders to visit relatives

**Child Support and Custody**

- Unmarried parents can voluntarily establish paternity at the child’s birth in the hospital or by going to their local child support office
- State law presumes joint managing conservatorship
- Application for public benefits by custodial parent automatically opens child support case if a child support order does not already exist
- All child support orders are accompanied by parenting time plan
- OAG phone hotline and online resource directory helps noncustodial parents enforce access and visitation
- OAG + TDCJ cooperate to assist incarcerated noncustodial parents with modifying child support orders
- OAG + TWC Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) Choices Program supports low-income or under/unemployed noncustodial parents

For full policy brief, go to [childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu/fatherhoodintx](http://childandfamilyresearch.utexas.edu/fatherhoodintx).