



Substitute House Bill No. 6486

Public Act No. 09-175

AN ACT CONCERNING RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD AND STRONG FAMILIES.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 17b-27a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2009*):

(a) There is established within the Department of Social Services, within available appropriations, the John S. Martinez Fatherhood Initiative. Said initiative shall promote the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children with an emphasis on children eligible or formerly eligible for services funded by the temporary assistance for needy families block grant and shall identify those services that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting and those services that increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and medical needs of their children through employment services and child support enforcement measures. The objectives of the initiative shall be to: (1) Promote public education concerning the financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood; (2) assist men in preparation for the legal, financial and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood; (3) promote the establishment of paternity at childbirth; (4) encourage fathers, regardless of marital status, to foster their emotional connection to and financial support of

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their children; (5) establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationship with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status; and (6) integrate state and local services available for families.

(b) Not later than February 1, 2010, the Commissioner of Social Services shall, within available resources, report to the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a, regarding (1) the effectiveness of any child support arrears management efforts; (2) the effectiveness of any efforts aimed at reducing teen fatherhood; (3) the number of newly employed noncustodial parents; and (4) the number of noncustodial parents with incomes at or below the federal poverty level.

(c) The commissioner shall, within available resources, seek to obtain any available federal and private funds for programs that promote the objectives described in subsection (a) of this section. If such funds are obtained, the commissioner shall award grants to entities for such programs, as provided in subsection (d) of this section.

(d) The Department of Social Services shall award grants to entities under this section for programs and services that provide (1) employment and training opportunities for low-income fathers to increase the earning capacity of such fathers; (2) classes in parenting and financial management; and (3) other support services and programs that promote responsible parenting, financial stability and communication and interaction between fathers and their children.

(e) Applicants for grants provided pursuant to this section shall apply to the Commissioner of Social Services at such time and in such manner as the commissioner prescribes. The commissioner shall establish criteria for eligibility for grants and for the awarding of

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grants pursuant to this section. The commissioner shall require a grantee to (1) implement accountability measures and results-based outcomes as a condition of being awarded a grant; (2) leverage funds through existing resources and collaboration with community-based and nonprofit organizations; and (3) consult with experts in domestic violence to ensure that, when appropriate, the programs and services described in subsections (c) and (d) of this section address issues concerning domestic violence.

(f) Not later than October 1, 2010, and annually thereafter, the commissioner shall report, in accordance with section 11-4a, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children on the grant program's effectiveness in achieving the objectives specified in subsection (a) of this section.

Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2009*) (a) In all IV-D support cases, family support magistrates shall have the authority to enter an order for the obligor's participation in an educational, training, skill-building, work, rehabilitation or other similar program, provided the family support magistrate finds that such an order will significantly increase the obligor's ability to fulfill the duty of support within a reasonable period of time. When such an order is entered, the family support magistrate shall also enter an order regarding the reporting of the obligor's compliance with such program.

(b) Upon motion and after hearing, a family support magistrate may suspend payment of a specified support order, in whole or in part, or elect not to impose or order specified court-based enforcement actions, provided the obligor is participating in a program described in subsection (a) of this section.

(c) On or before July 1, 2010, and on or before July 1, 2011, the Chief

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Court Administrator shall submit the reports of the Problem Solving in Family Matters Committee of the judicial branch detailing such committee's findings to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children in accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes.

Approved June 30, 2009