



Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Family Act of 2007

(S.1626 and H.R. 3395)

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On June 29, Senators Bayh (D-IN) and Obama (D-IL) introduced the “Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2006.” A companion bill was introduced in the House on August 3, 2007 by Representative Danny Davis (D-IL). The legislation would address child support distribution and arrears management; expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for non-custodial parents paying child support, and increase funding for domestic violence activities in marriage and fatherhood and employment programs.

The Senate bill includes provisions to:

- Repeal section 7309 of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA), which eliminated the authority to pay federal matching funds on performance incentive payments used to pay for child support activities required under the state plan.
- Repeal section 7310 of the DRA, which imposed a collections fee on certain never-assistance cases.
- Prohibit TANF assignment of child support rights, mandate full distribution to families, and require states to disregard a portion of support income in the TANF program that is at least equivalent to the TANF earned income disregard.
- Require states to deduct 20 percent of child support income received by families in calculating food stamps benefits.

- Ensure that child support collected in foster care cases funded under title IV-E of the Social Security Act is used in the best interests of the child, rather than cost recovery, and includes authority to establish child support trust accounts.
- Ban cost recovery of Medicaid birthing costs through the child support program.
- Prohibit treating incarceration as “voluntary unemployment.”
- Require states to use their review and adjustment procedure to make adjustments in arrears permanently assigned to the state.
- Require states to assess policies that create barriers to employment and child support payments.
- Eliminate separate TANF work participate rates for two-parent families.
- Expand the childless worker EITC and provide an additional credit for non-custodial parents who are current on child support payments. Also require HHS to undertake a study of age eligibility restrictions on EITC, the impact of state EITC programs, and the challenges faced by legal immigrants and others for whom English is not a primary language in fulfilling child support obligations.
- Strengthen domestic violence protocols and provide an additional \$50 million for fiscal years 2008 through 2010 to implement them in the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grant program authorized by the 2005 Deficit Reduction Act.
- Fund grants (1) for demonstration projects for programs supervised by courts or child support agencies to increase employment and child support payments by non-custodial parents and improve parent-child relationships; (2) to expand transitional jobs programs; and (3) to create public-private partnerships to improve career pathways for disadvantaged workers and at risk youth.