Regular Session, 2013

HOUSE BILL NO. 572

BY REPRESENTATIVE WESLEY BISHOP

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

CHILDREN/SUPPORT: Provides relative to the Fatherhood First Initiative

AN ACT

To amend and reenact Subpart C of Part of II of Chapter 3 of Title 46 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be comprised of R.S. 46:261, relative to the Fatherhood First Initiative; to establish the Fatherhood First Initiative; to establish a Fatherhood First Council; to provide for membership and duties of the council; to provide for a research and demonstration program; to require reporting; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. Subpart C of Part of II of Chapter 3 of Title 46 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, comprised of R.S. 46:261, is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

SUBPART C. FATHERHOOD <u>FIRST</u> INITIATIVE

§261. Fatherhood <u>first</u> initiative; establishment

A. The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services, within available appropriations, shall establish a program to be known as the "Fatherhood <u>First</u> Initiative". This program 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 (TANF) block grant. This program shall identify those services that effectively encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting and those

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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 program 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 connections to and financial support of their children.

(5) Establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationships with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status.

(6) Integrate state and local services available for families.

(7) Promote public education and increase public awareness of resources for the following areas:

(a) Substance abuse and addiction.

(b) Anger management and conflict resolution.

(c) Fiscal awareness and financial literacy.

(d) Parenting skills, child development, and family studies.

B. The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services shall convene and chair a Fatherhood First Council. The secretary shall convene the council no later than October 1, 2013. The secretary shall seek the advice and participation of any person, organization, or state or federal agency deemed necessary to carry out the provisions of this Section. The secretary may designate a working group from among the members of the council to carry out specific duties required pursuant to this Section.

C. The Fatherhood First Council shall perform the following functions:

(1) Develop a comprehensive plan to promote the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children.

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(2) Conduct an evaluation of state programs, government policies, and community initiatives relative to fatherhood.

(3) Advise the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services on the development of a fatherhood research and demonstration program relative to design, implementation, and evaluation pursuant to this Section.

D. The membership of the council shall be appointed by the secretary and shall include but not be limited to:

(1) The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services or his designee.

(2) The secretary of the Louisiana Workforce Commission or his designee.

(3) The secretary of the Department of Education or his designee.

(4) The secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections or his designee.

(5) Two representatives of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board.

(6) One representative of the Louisiana District Attorneys Association.

(7) One representative of a regional workforce development board.

(8) One or more representatives of the clergy.

(9) One or more representatives of a local fatherhood program.

(10) One member with expertise in male psychology and health.

(11) One representative of the Second Time Around Grandparents Support Group.

E. The Fatherhood First Council shall establish a comprehensive plan for the implementation of the Fatherhood First Initiative and the research and demonstration program. The plan may include but shall not be limited to the following:

(1) A planning process that gathers input from the public through public hearings or other means.

(2) The establishment of an inventory and evaluation of state and federal programs, community initiatives, government policies, and any other services identified that encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting through

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positive involvement and interaction with fathers and those services that increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and medical needs of their children. In establishing the inventory and evaluation, the council may collect and assess data to determine the scope of concerns, review fatherhood programs in other jurisdictions, identify private, state, and federal funding opportunities, or collect any other information the council deems necessary.

(3) The identification of the services that can be provided to fathers including but not limited to employment services, parenting skills, teen pregnancy prevention services, educational services, child support enforcement services, paternity establishment services, custody and visitation services, conflict management services, family mediation, and any other community-based support programs providing assistance to fathers.

(4) The identification of the characteristics that will be used to target the population to be served in each demonstration program.

(5) A system that establishes mechanisms for voluntary and mandatory access to the services provided in the program for those individuals identified for participation including procedures for establishing and assessing the eligibility of an individual for the services provided in the program and procedures for providing guidance to courts ordering a noncustodial parent's participation in the program in lieu of, or in addition to, a child or medical support obligation.

(6) The identification of a case management system for the full range of services offered in the program including mechanisms for referring program participants to community-based support programs.

F. The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services, in consultation with the executive director of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, shall establish a research and demonstration program that specifically evaluates the effectiveness and outcomes of services provided to fathers. The research and demonstration program shall be administered in not more than three research and demonstration sites from specific geographic regions or judicial districts and no more

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than one hundred fathers may participate in each site. The research and demonstration sites shall have an ability to:

(1) Utilize existing local, state, and federal resources.

(2) Collaborate with broad-based constituencies representing schools, municipal entities, nonprofit organizations, and other neighborhood, religious, health, and community organizations.

(3) Provide a safe, caring environment for participants. The sites shall have experience serving the targeted population. Each site shall provide services that recognize the cultural diversity of the population served. The secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services shall seek assistance in evaluating the effectiveness and outcomes from an institution of higher education, a consortium of institutes of higher education, or another qualified entity. The evaluation shall measure the effectiveness and outcomes of services in the following areas:

(a) Child support and medical support.

(b) Job placement and retention.

(c) Increased earnings.

(d) Increased visitation.

(e) Family reunification.

(f) Paternity establishment or adjudication.

(g) The need of a custodial parent for public and medical assistance.

(h) Teen pregnancy prevention.

(i) Effect on fathers under the age of twenty-three years.

(j) Low-income or unemployed fathers.

(k) Educational levels.

(l) Measures of emotional involvement of fathers.

(m) The overall cost effectiveness, including a cost-benefit analysis of the services provided on an aggregate and case-by-case basis.

<u>(n) Substance abuse and addiction treatment.</u>

<u>(o) Anger management and conflict resolution.</u>

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(p) Fiscal awareness and financial literacy.

(q) Parenting skills, child development, and family studies.

G.(1) No later than March 1, 2014, the Fatherhood First Council shall submit an interim report relative to the status of the comprehensive plan established pursuant to this Section to the secretary of the Department of Children and Family Services. The secretary shall add his assessments thereto, and present the findings to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance prior to the start of the 2014 Regular Session of the Legislature.

(2) No later than March 1, 2015, the council shall submit a final report to the secretary on the comprehensive plan which shall include:

(a) Recommendations for the continued implementation of the Fatherhood First Initiative.

(b) Recommendations for the expansion or statewide implementation of fatherhood programs.

(3) The secretary shall add his assessments thereto, and present the findings to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance prior to the start of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

Wesley Bishop HB No. 572

Abstract: Establishes the Fatherhood First Initiative.

Present law establishes a program to be known as the "Fatherhood Initiative" to 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 (TANF) block grant.

Proposed law retains present law but renames the program to the "Fatherhood First Initiative".

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Present law requires the program to 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 program 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 connections to and financial support of their children.

(5) Establish support mechanisms for fathers in their relationships with their children, regardless of their marital and financial status.

(6) Integrate state and local services available for families.

Proposed law retains present law and adds the objective to promote public education concerning and increase public awareness of resources for the following areas:

(1) Substance abuse and addiction.

(2) Anger management and conflict resolution.

(3) Fiscal awareness and financial literacy.

(4) Parenting skills, child developments, and family studies.

Proposed law requires the secretary of the Dept. of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to convene and chair a Fatherhood First Council no later than Oct. 1, 2013. The secretary shall seek the advice and participation of any person, organization, or state or federal agency deemed necessary to carry out the provisions of proposed law. The secretary may designate a working group from among the members of the council to carry out specific duties required under proposed law.

Proposed law requires the Fatherhood First Council to perform the following functions:

(1) Develop a comprehensive plan to promote the positive involvement and interaction of fathers with their children.

(2) Conduct an evaluation of state programs, government policies, and community initiatives relative to fatherhood.

(3) Advise the secretary of DCFS on the development of a fatherhood research and demonstration program relative to design, implementation, and evaluation pursuant to proposed law.

Proposed law provides that the membership of the council shall be appointed by the secretary and shall include but not be limited to:

(1) The secretary of DCFS or his designee.

(2) The secretary of the La. Workforce Commission or his designee.

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(3) The secretary of the Dept. of Education or his designee.

(4) The secretary of the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections or his designee.

(5) Two representatives of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board.

(6) One representative of the La. District Attorneys Association.

(7) One representative of a regional workforce development board.

(8) One or more representatives of the clergy.

(9) One or more representatives of a local fatherhood program.

(10) One member with expertise in male psychology and health.

(11) One representative of the Second Time Around Grandparents Support Group.

Proposed law requires the Fatherhood First Council to establish a comprehensive plan for the implementation of the Fatherhood First Initiative and the research and demonstration program. The plan may include but shall not be limited to the following:

(1) A planning process that gathers input from the public through public hearings or other means.

(2) The establishment of an inventory and evaluation of state and federal programs, community initiatives, government policies, and any other services identified that encourage and enhance responsible and skillful parenting through positive involvement and interaction with fathers and those services that increase the ability of fathers to meet the financial and medical needs of their children.

(3) The identification of the services that can be provided to fathers including but not limited to employment services, parenting skills, teen pregnancy prevention services, educational services, child support enforcement services, paternity establishment services, custody and visitation services, conflict management services, family mediation, and any other community-based support programs providing assistance to fathers.

(4) The identification of the characteristics that will be used to target the population to be served in each demonstration program.

(5) A system that establishes mechanisms for voluntary and mandatory access to the services provided in the program for those individuals identified for participation including procedures for establishing and assessing the eligibility of an individual for the services provided in the program and procedures for providing guidance to courts ordering a noncustodial parent's participation in the program in lieu of, or in addition to, a child or medical support obligation.

(6) The identification of a case management system for the full range of services offered in the program including mechanisms for referring program participants to community-based support programs.

Present law requires the secretary of DCFS, in consultation with the executive director of the La. Workforce Commission, to establish a research and demonstration program that specifically evaluates the effectiveness and outcomes of services provided to fathers. The research and demonstration sites shall have an ability to:

(1) Utilize existing local, state, and federal resources.

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(2) Collaborate with broad-based constituencies representing schools, municipal entities, nonprofit organizations, and other neighborhood, religious, health, and community organizations.

(3) Provide a safe, caring environment for participants. The evaluation shall measure the effectiveness and outcomes of services in the following areas: child support and medical support, job placement and retention, increased earnings, increased visitation, family reunification, paternity establishment or adjudication, the need of a custodial parent for public and medical assistance, teen pregnancy prevention, the effect on fathers under the age of twenty-three years, low-income or unemployed fathers, educational levels, measures of emotional involvement of fathers, and the overall cost effectiveness, including a cost-benefit analysis of the services provided on an aggregate and case-by-case basis.

Proposed law retains present law and adds the following areas: substance abuse and addiction treatment, anger management and conflict resolution skills, fiscal awareness and financial literacy, and parenting skills, child development, and family studies.

Proposed law requires the Fatherhood First Council, no later than Mar. 1, 2014, to submit an interim report relative to the status of the comprehensive plan established under this Section to the secretary of the DCFS. The secretary shall add his assessments thereto, and present the findings to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance prior to the start of the 2014 Regular Session of the Legislature.

Proposed law requires the council, no later than Mar. 1, 2015, to submit a final report to the secretary on the comprehensive plan which shall include:

(1) Recommendations for the continued implementation of the Fatherhood First Initiative.

(2) Recommendations for the expansion or statewide implementation of fatherhood programs.

(3) The secretary shall add his assessments thereto, and present the findings to the House and Senate Committees on Health and Welfare, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance prior to the start of the 2015 Regular Session of the Legislature.

(Amends R.S. 46:261)

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