

# ASSEMBLY, No. 945

## STATE OF NEW JERSEY 216th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2014 SESSION

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman TROY SINGLETON**

**District 7 (Burlington)**

**Assemblywoman BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN**

**District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)**

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**Assemblyman GARY S. SCHAER**

**District 36 (Bergen and Passaic)**

**Assemblyman BENJIE E. WIMBERLY**

**District 35 (Bergen and Passaic)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

**Assemblywomen Jimenez, Mosquera, Assemblyman Fuentes and  
Assemblywoman Riley**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes New Jersey Council on Responsible Fatherhood and Responsible Fatherhood Fund.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel



1 AN ACT establishing the New Jersey Council on Responsible  
2 Fatherhood and supplementing Title 9 of the Revised Statutes.

3

4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the State  
5 of New Jersey:

6

7 1. a. There is established the New Jersey Council on  
8 Responsible Fatherhood in the Department of Children and  
9 Families.

10 b. The purpose of the council is to identify the needs and  
11 priorities relating to fatherhood programs in the State, promote the  
12 participation of both parents in the lives of their children, and  
13 support the contributions each parent brings to the family unit.

14 c. The council shall consist of 21 members as follows:

15 (1) two members of the Senate to be appointed by the President  
16 of the Senate who shall each be of different political parties;

17 (2) two members of the General Assembly to be appointed by  
18 the Speaker of the General Assembly who shall each be of different  
19 political parties;

20 (3) the Commissioners of Children and Families, Corrections,  
21 Education, Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development,  
22 and the Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, or their  
23 designees, who shall serve ex officio;

24 (4) seven public members appointed by the Governor who shall  
25 include a representative of the Advocates for Children of New  
26 Jersey, a representative of Foster and Adoptive Family Services, a  
27 representative of Legal Services of New Jersey, a county welfare  
28 agency worker with experience in working with children who  
29 receive public assistance, a licensed social worker with experience  
30 or expertise in working with children and families affected by  
31 divorce or legal separation, an employee of the Administrative  
32 Office of the Courts with experience in working with child support,  
33 custody, and visitation issues, and a member of the clergy; and

34 (5) four public members, two of whom shall have experience in  
35 working with fatherhood programs and shall be appointed by the  
36 President of the Senate and two of whom are fathers who have  
37 graduated from fatherhood programs and shall be appointed by the  
38 Speaker of the General Assembly.

39 d. Vacancies in the membership of the council shall be filled in  
40 the same manner provided for the original appointments. The public  
41 members of the council shall serve without compensation but may  
42 be reimbursed for traveling and other miscellaneous expenses  
43 necessary to perform their duties, within the limits of funds made  
44 available to the council for its purposes.

45 e. The council shall organize as soon as practicable but no later  
46 than 60 days following the appointment of its members and shall  
47 select a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among the members.  
48 The chairperson shall appoint a secretary who need not be a

1 member of the council.

2 f. The council may meet at the call of its chair and hold  
3 hearings at the times and in the places it deems appropriate and  
4 necessary to fulfill its charge. The council shall be entitled to call  
5 to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of  
6 any State, county, or municipal department, board, bureau,  
7 commission, or agency as it may require and as may be available to  
8 it for its purposes.

9 g. The council may seek the advice of experts, such as persons  
10 specializing in the field of social work, education, law, human  
11 services, economic development, workforce development, or other  
12 related fields, as deemed appropriate by the membership of the  
13 council.

14 h. The Department of Children and Families shall provide staff  
15 services to the council.

16

17 2. The council shall:

18 a. direct the development and implementation of a Responsible  
19 Fatherhood Initiative established pursuant to section 3 of this act;

20 b. develop a comprehensive plan that identifies the needs and  
21 priorities relating to fatherhood programs in the State and promotes  
22 the positive involvement of fathers in their children's lives;

23 c. serve as an information and resource center for data and  
24 information on fatherhood programs;

25 d. review the programs, policies, and initiatives of the  
26 Departments of Children and Families, Corrections, Education,  
27 Human Services, Labor and Workforce Development, and any other  
28 department of State government or community-based organization,  
29 as appropriate, that concern responsible fatherhood, and make  
30 recommendations to the departments and organizations that will  
31 enable them to better coordinate and improve the effectiveness of  
32 such programs, policies, and initiatives;

33 e. convene an annual Statewide symposium to discuss issues  
34 relating to fatherhood and the importance of the participation of  
35 both parents in the lives of children, and to develop strategies to  
36 encourage fathers to become more responsible parents;

37 f. apply for, and accept, any grant of money from the federal  
38 government, private foundations, or other sources, which may be  
39 available for programs related to responsible fatherhood; and

40 g. provide grants to community-based organizations to  
41 establish, expand, or improve fatherhood programs.

42

43 3. a. The council shall establish a Responsible Fatherhood  
44 Initiative. The goal of the initiative shall be to:

45 (1) promote the positive interaction between fathers and their  
46 children;

47 (2) increase public awareness of the problems created when  
48 children grow up without the presence of responsible fathers;

1 (3) identify obstacles that impede or prevent the involvement of  
2 responsible fathers in the lives of their children, and develop  
3 strategies to successfully overcome such obstacles and encourage  
4 responsible fatherhood; and

5 (4) facilitate policies and practices that encourage the  
6 participation of fathers in their children's lives and promote the  
7 contributions of responsible fathers.

8 b. The initiative shall be geared towards children whose  
9 families have received or are receiving public assistance benefits  
10 pursuant to P.L.1947, c.156 (C.44:8-107 et seq.), P.L.1973, c.256  
11 (C.44:7-85 et seq.), or P.L.1997, c.38 (C.44:10-55 et seq.), but may  
12 not exclude any other population of children who may benefit from  
13 the programs and services offered through the initiative.

14 c. The initiative shall include, but not be limited to, the  
15 development of:

16 (1) a public education and awareness campaign on the legal,  
17 financial, and emotional responsibilities of fatherhood and the  
18 benefits of a father establishing paternity upon a child's birth;

19 (2) programs and services aimed at educating men in preparing  
20 for the responsibilities of fatherhood by fostering emotional  
21 connections to, and providing financial support, for their children;

22 (3) an information and support network for fathers trying to  
23 develop, maintain, and improve relationships with their children;

24 (4) a plan to identify and promote methods that reduce the  
25 negative outcomes experienced by children affected by divorce,  
26 legal separation, and custody and visitation disputes; and

27 (5) a plan to enhance the coordination of services available to  
28 children and families between State and local governmental and  
29 community-based social services agencies.

30

31 4. a. There is established in the Department of the Treasury a  
32 nonlapsing fund to be known as the "Responsible Fatherhood  
33 Fund." This fund shall be the repository for monies provided  
34 pursuant to subsection f. of section 2 of this act. Moneys deposited  
35 in the fund, and any interest earned thereon, shall be allocated to the  
36 council to carry out the purposes provided for in subsections f. and  
37 g. of section 2 of this act.

38 b. Any costs incurred by the department in the collection or  
39 administration of the fund may be deducted from the funds  
40 deposited therein, as determined by the Director of the Division of  
41 Budget and Accounting.

42

43 5. The council shall report to the Governor and, pursuant to  
44 section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1) to the Legislature, on  
45 December 31st of each year, on the activities of the council,  
46 including, but not limited to, the development and implementation  
47 of the Responsible Fatherhood Initiative, and its findings and  
48 recommendations regarding the coordination and effectiveness of

1 State programs, policies, and initiatives concerning responsible  
2 fatherhood.

3

4 6. The Commissioner of Children and Families, pursuant to the  
5 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et  
6 seq.), shall adopt rules and regulations necessary to effectuate the  
7 purposes of this act.

8

9 7. This act shall take effect immediately.

10

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12

#### STATEMENT

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14 This bill establishes the New Jersey Council on Responsible  
15 Fatherhood in the Department of Children and Families. The bill  
16 purposes the council to identify the needs and priorities relating to  
17 State fatherhood programs, promote parental participation in the  
18 lives of their children, and support parental contributions to the  
19 family unit.

20

#### *The Council's Membership*

21  
22 To be organized within 60 days following appointment, the bill  
23 establishes the council's membership as follows:

24 (1) Four Legislative Members and Six Executive Branch Officers

25 -Two members of the Senate and two members of the General  
26 Assembly, including one member of each political party from  
27 each chamber, appointed by the respective presiding officers;

28 -The Commissioners of Children and Families, Corrections,  
29 Education, Human Services, Labor and Workforce  
30 Development, and the Director of the Administrative Office of  
31 the Courts, or their ex officio designees.

32 (2) Seven Public Members – Gubernatorially Appointed

33 -A representative of the Advocates for Children of New Jersey,

34 -A representative of Foster and Adoptive Family Services,

35 -A representative of Legal Services of New Jersey,

36 -A county welfare agency worker with experience in working  
37 with children who receive public assistance,

38 -A licensed social worker with experience or expertise in  
39 working with children and families affected by divorce or legal  
40 separation,

41 -An employee of the Administrative Office of the Courts with  
42 experience in working with child support, custody, and  
43 visitation issues, and

44 -A member of the clergy.

45 (3) Four Public Members – Legislatively Appointed

46 -Two with experience in working with fatherhood programs  
47 appointed by the President of the Senate; and

48 -Two fathers who have graduated from fatherhood programs

1 appointed by the Speaker of the General Assembly.

2 The bill denotes that council members shall serve without  
3 compensation, but may be reimbursed for traveling expenses and  
4 miscellaneous business expenses to the extent funds are available.

5 The Department of Children and Families shall staff the council.

6

7

8 ***The Council's Duties***

9 The bill entrusts the council with the following duties:

10 -Develop a comprehensive plan that identifies the needs and  
11 priorities relating to State fatherhood programs and promote the  
12 positive involvement of fathers in their children's lives;

13 -Serve as a resource center for fatherhood programs;

14 -Review State programs, policies, and initiatives concerning  
15 responsible fatherhood to make recommendations to increase  
16 effectiveness and coordination;

17 -Convene an annual Statewide symposium to discuss issues  
18 relating to fatherhood and the importance of parental participation  
19 in the lives of children while developing strategies to promote  
20 responsible parenting amongst fathers;

21 -Seek grant funding from the federal government, private  
22 foundations, or other sources for responsible fatherhood  
23 programming; -Provide grant funding to community-based  
24 organizations to establish, expand, or improve fatherhood  
25 programming; and

26 -Develop a Responsible Fatherhood Initiative.

27

28 ***The Council's Responsible Fatherhood Initiative***

29 The bill directs the council to develop a Responsible Fatherhood  
30 Initiative. Aimed at children of families that have received public  
31 assistance, but without a focused exclusion, the bill charges the  
32 Council with administering an initiative designed to promote  
33 fatherly interaction, increase awareness of the problems posed by  
34 absent fathers, identify systemic obstacles to fatherly interaction  
35 and solutions thereto, and facilitate best practices in fatherly  
36 interaction and contributions.

37 The bill specifically charges the Council with developing the  
38 initiative as encompassing:

39 -A public awareness campaign on the legal, financial, and  
40 emotional responsibilities of fatherhood and the benefits of  
41 paternity establishment;

42 -Programs and services aimed at educating men in preparing for  
43 the emotional and financial responsibilities of fatherhood;

44 -An information and support network for fathers trying to foster  
45 relationships with their children; and

46 -Plans to identify and promote methods that reduce the negative  
47 outcomes experienced by children affected by divorce, legal  
48 separation, and custody and visitation disputes, and to enhance the

1 coordination of services available to children and families between  
2 government and community-based social services agencies.

3

4 ***The Responsible Fatherhood Fund***

5 The bill establishes the "Responsible Fatherhood Fund" in the  
6 Department of the Treasury as a nonlapsing, revolving fund. The  
7 bill directs the deposit to the fund of all grant funding received by  
8 the council for responsible fatherhood programming. Money  
9 deposited in the fund, including any interest earned thereon, is to be  
10 restricted to the council's fatherhood grant funding programs.  
11 Costs of fund administration may be deducted from the fund  
12 deposits.

13

14 ***Rulemaking and Reporting***

15 The bill grants the Commissioner of Children and Families  
16 rulemaking authority to implement the bill.

17 The bill requires the council to provide an annual report to the  
18 Governor and the Legislature on the activities of the council. The  
19 bill denotes that the report is to include, but not be limited to, the  
20 council's findings and recommendations regarding the coordination  
21 and effectiveness of State programs, policies, and initiatives  
22 concerning responsible fatherhood.