

MAR 7 2001
HUMAN RESOURCES

HOUSE FILE 543
BY HATCH

Passed House, Date _____ Passed Senate, Date _____
Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____ Vote: Ayes _____ Nays _____
Approved _____

A BILL FOR

1 An Act relating to the establishment of a parental involvement
2 program.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

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HF 543

1 Section 1. NEW SECTION. 217A.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
2 PROGRAM.

3 1. The department of human services shall convene an
4 advisory group that includes representatives of the Iowa
5 department of public health, the department of education, the
6 department of workforce development, the department of
7 corrections, the Iowa empowerment board, other state agencies
8 that provide services to families, and representatives of
9 business and industry, parents, and state and local community
10 leaders, to develop a plan that provides a comprehensive
11 approach to policy and service delivery at the state, county,
12 and local level and provides a network of services to assist
13 both mothers and fathers in parenting their children. While
14 the comprehensive approach shall address the needs of both
15 parents, the focus shall be on creating a policy and service
16 delivery system that provides a network of resources to assist
17 fathers in becoming and remaining engaged in their children's
18 lives. The plan shall be implemented on or before December
19 31, 2001. The advisory group shall monitor the program and
20 shall convene to recommend changes in policy and service
21 delivery following implementation.

22 2. The comprehensive approach to parental involvement
23 shall provide for all of the following:

24 a. STRUCTURE AND POLICIES.

25 (1) Identification of state laws, regulations, policies,
26 and practices that interfere with or fail to help fathers
27 become or remain engaged in their children's lives. Following
28 identification, a statewide policy and service delivery
29 strategy shall be developed and implemented to facilitate
30 collaboration between existing state agencies to provide
31 access points to channel fathers to necessary services. The
32 policy and service delivery system shall support both parents
33 and shall be gender neutral.

34 (2) Development of flexible service delivery options
35 within the state system, including in the public assistance

1 and child support systems, to address the varying needs of
2 families which may include traditional enforcement of program
3 requirements, referral to services, or other options.

4 (3) Integration of the state system and community level
5 services to provide a social network that is accessible to
6 fathers as well as mothers. The integration shall include the
7 development of a partnership between the courts, child support
8 enforcement, the family investment program and other state
9 programs, and community-based organizations that deliver an
10 array of services. The partnership shall promote delivery of
11 services to fathers at the same level as to mothers and the
12 services shall include but are not limited to employment
13 assistance; job training; peer support; relationship building;
14 parenting; social and business skills development; and other
15 services that increase a parent's ability to be a successful
16 parent.

17 (4) Creation of a systemwide approach for delivery of
18 services to families that creates a family support network
19 that does all of the following:

20 (a) Trains service workers to include both fathers and
21 mothers as a family unit, rather than separately, in the
22 delivery of services.

23 (b) Promotes a common awareness across disciplines, for
24 workers providing services to parents and families, of the
25 importance of both parents in children's lives.

26 (c) Systematically engages both parents and does not
27 segment families in the provision of services.

28 (d) Improves communication across delivery systems.

29 (e) Provides for the partnering of various disciplines and
30 levels of government in providing services to parents and
31 families.

32 (5) Implementation of enhanced child support policies.
33 Child support agencies shall be used to combine traditional
34 support enforcement efforts with nontraditional methods such
35 as downward modification which reflect the father's real

1 income, referral to employment services, development of
2 payment plans, and referral to services to negotiate
3 visitation plans or develop better parenting and relationship
4 skills. Policies shall provide for services to both parents
5 as a family unit and shall view fathers as clients of the
6 system not as adversaries of the system. Enhanced child
7 support policies shall include the development of procedures
8 to distinguish fathers who are able to pay support but refuse
9 to pay support from fathers who are unable to pay support due
10 to unemployment or employment that pays an insufficient wage
11 for self-support and support of children. Child support
12 procedures shall include outreach to fathers prior to child
13 support proceedings to elicit their input in establishing a
14 realistic child support order amount, and shall provide
15 fathers with information about the child support system
16 including information regarding rights and responsibilities
17 under the system.

18 b. CONNECTING FATHERS WITH NECESSARY SERVICES.

19 (1) Utilization of the existing service system, including
20 the courts and the public assistance and child support
21 systems, as contact points to connect fathers with local
22 community-based services that help fathers develop the skills
23 to become better parents and partners and more productive
24 members of the workforce.

25 (2) Utilization of employment opportunities and training
26 as catalysts to involve fathers with programs and then
27 encourage participation in supplementary services such as peer
28 support, counseling, anger management, and parenting education
29 that help fathers develop skills to retain jobs and build
30 healthy relationships.

31 (3) Utilization of nontraditional contacts such as
32 voluntary paternity establishment programs, child care
33 centers, head start, recreation centers, and others to connect
34 fathers with necessary services.

35 (4) Utilization of contacts with women who are

1 participating in public assistance programs to connect with
2 fathers, if appropriate.

3 c. PUBLIC AWARENESS.

4 (1) Promotion of public awareness of the importance of the
5 emotional and financial involvement of both parents in their
6 children's lives.

7 (2) Use of the media to encourage parents to discuss
8 pregnancy prevention and parental responsibility with their
9 children.

10 d. PREVENTION OF AND PLANNING FOR PARENTHOOD.

11 (1) Inclusion in the curriculum of grades nine through
12 twelve and in the postsecondary education curriculum of
13 responsible parenthood programs. The curriculum shall target
14 both young men and young women and shall include gender-
15 specific lessons for males and females that focus on the
16 unique male and female roles in pregnancy prevention. Other
17 programs that encourage young men and women to delay
18 parenthood and that provide preparation for the emotional,
19 legal, financial, and educational responsibilities of
20 parenthood shall be promoted.

21 (2) Utilization of a variety of access points to reach
22 young men who may be outside of the school environment to
23 provide prevention information. Such access points may
24 include recreation centers and sporting events, youth
25 development, peer education, youth leadership development,
26 male involvement groups, media campaigns, community programs,
27 and street outreach. Information provided shall focus on the
28 issues of respect, leadership, and responsibility. Mentoring
29 programs shall be used to provide young men with positive
30 adult role models. A sense of hope for the future shall be
31 encouraged by providing alternatives to risky behaviors such
32 as educational and employment opportunities combined with
33 training in life skills, prevention information, and male
34 responsibility.

35 (3) Integration of responsible parenthood and fatherhood

1 curricula into existing abstinence and sexuality education.

2 e. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES. Promotion of employment policies
3 in the public and private sectors that are single-parent
4 friendly.

5 f. FUNDING. Identification of funding streams to channel
6 available funds to parental involvement programs.

7 EXPLANATION

8 This bill directs the department of human services to
9 convene an advisory group to develop a plan to provide a
10 comprehensive approach to policy and service delivery at the
11 state, county, and local levels that provides a network of
12 services to assist both mothers and fathers in parenting their
13 children. The bill provides that while the plan is to address
14 the needs of both parents, the focus is to be on providing a
15 network of services to fathers. The plan is to be implemented
16 on or before December 31, 2001. The approach is to include
17 provisions relating to system structure and policies,
18 connection of fathers with necessary services, public
19 awareness, prevention of and planning for parenthood,
20 employment policy improvements, and identification and
21 channeling of funding streams to support parental involvement
22 programs.

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