



SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 9J.13: Responsible Fatherhood NC Program

2025-2026 General Assembly

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 9J.13

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Section 9J.13 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257), as amended by Section 4.10 of Session Law 2026-61 (House Bill 268), creates the "Responsible Fatherhood NC Program" (Program).

Of the funds appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (DSS), the sum of \$2,750,000 in nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year must be used to implement the Program as follows: (i) up to \$2 million must be used to contract for the Program Manager; and (ii) the remainder of the funds must be used for the authorized grants.

DSS must contract with a nonprofit organization to serve as the Program Manager. The nonprofit must have the following: (i) a history of focusing on responsible fatherhood; and (ii) the organizational capacity to manage a statewide initiative and successfully carry out the Program requirements.

The Program Manager has the sole responsibility for developing, implementing, and managing the Program which, at a minimum, must: (i) establish a statewide media campaign that increases the awareness and importance of fathers' involvement in their children's lives; (ii) provide resources and information to increase fathers' and father figures' engagement and involvement in their children's lives; and (iii) promote fatherhood programs provided by the Department of Public Instruction, the Community College System, or The University of North Carolina System. To effectively use the appropriated funds, the Program Manager must identify and use existing media assets, content, and online resources deemed appropriate.

DSS must establish a process to award the following two types of grants to nonprofit community-based organizations to address the needs of fathers: (i) grants that comprehensively address the needs of fathers by providing tailored services and case management services; and (ii) grants that provide evidence-based parenting education specifically for fathers.

DSS must prioritize these grant applicants based on the following: (i) the need in a geographic area and the population to be served by the grant as indicated by certain required data points; (ii) whether an applicant has a primary mission or history of significant and effective work addressing the needs of fathers; (iii) an applicant's involvement in the community being served; (iv) an applicant's commitment and capability to employ competent staff who can effectively engage with the fathers being served, including staff who share a similar background as the fathers; (v) the number of individuals the applicant plans to serve through the grant and the projected costs for the program; and (vi) an applicant's organizational capacity to effectively meet the grant requirements and deliver the programs proposed by the applicant. DSS can offer technical assistance to applicants and grant recipients that have lower organizational capacity as long as those organizations or its leadership have significant experience serving fathers. The grant recipients must submit reports to DSS as prescribed by DSS.

DSS must implement these requirements no later January 1, 2027.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.

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