

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 483

50th Legislature, 1st Session, 2011

Tracking Number: .185131.1

Short Title: Federal Funding to Family Formation Programs

Sponsor(s): Representatives Alonzo Baldonado and Nora Espinoza and Others

Analyst: James Ball

Date: March 12, 2011

Bill Summary:

HB 483 enacts a new section of the *New Mexico Works Act* (NMWA) to require that at least 1.0 percent of the federal block grant for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) be spent on programs and services that encourage family formation, marriage, and responsible fatherhood, including:

- educational programs in high schools on the value of marriage, relationship skills, and budgeting;
- marriage education, marriage skills, and relationship skills programs that may include parenting skills, financial management, conflict resolution, and job and career advancement for non-married pregnant women and non-married expectant fathers;
- premarital education, marriage skills training, and relationship skills programs for engaged couples and couples or individuals interested in marriage;
- marriage enhancement and marriage skills training programs for married couples;
- divorce reduction programs that teach relationship skills;
- marriage mentoring programs that use married couples as role models and mentors in at-risk communities; and
- responsible fatherhood programs that promote or sustain marriage, by providing:
 - information about the benefits of marriage and two-parent involvement for children;
 - information about enhancing relationship skills;
 - education regarding how to control aggressive behavior;
 - information on domestic violence and child abuse;
 - marriage preparation programs;
 - premarital counseling;
 - skills-based marriage education; and
 - family financial planning seminars.
- promotion of responsible parenting by providing training such as skills-based parenting education; and
- fostering economic stability by helping fathers improve their economic status through work first services, job search, job training, subsidized employment, job retention, and job enhancement.

Among its other provisions, HB 483 requires that:

- funds for family formation and responsible fatherhood programs be administered under contract with a state public postsecondary educational institution that has demonstrated success in administering TANF programs in both the northern and southern parts of the state;
- family formation and responsible fatherhood programs offer at least 8 hours of education or training to individuals or couples using evidence-based curricula to develop a domestic violence protocol in conjunction with local domestic violence programs;
- the Secretary of the Human Services Department (HSD) promulgate rules for family formation and responsible fatherhood programs; and
- the secretary report annually through 2014 to the Legislature on program status and program funding.

Fiscal Impact:

HB 483 does not contain an appropriation.

Fiscal Issues:

According to the analysis of HB 483 by HSD, there are insufficient TANF funds to expand programs at this time. In fact, HSD recently has had to make significant program cuts including:

- \$13.5 million from the Children, Youth and Families Department Child Care program and elimination of certain support payments to TANF recipients;
- a decrease in funding to the NMWA service providers, New Mexico State University, and Commission on the Status of Women;
- the suspension of the Transition Bonus Program, resulting in the elimination of 584 households from the program; and
- a 15 percent budgetary adjustment to decrease TANF recipients' monthly cash assistance benefits as of January 1, 2011, resulting in a household of three receiving \$68.00 less per month.

HSD states that the department would require additional TANF appropriations to implement the provisions of HB 483.

Substantive Issues:

According to the analysis of HB 483 by the Public Education Department (PED), HSD would need to identify and reimburse a public postsecondary educational institution to deliver the Family Formation programs that would, in turn, partner with existing initiatives.

PED states that each year it currently funds 27 Graduation Reality and Dual-role Skills (GRADS) programs in high schools that facilitate parenting teens' graduation and economic independence and promote healthy families and reduce risk-taking behaviors. While GRADS does not specifically address marriage issues, it does:

- help students learn how to balance work and family roles;
- help prepare students for work and careers (economic independence);
- recruit school-age dropouts into the program;

- seek to retain students in school through graduation;
- reduce repeat pregnancies;
- develop positive parenting skills;
- develop skills for healthy relationships; and
- foster a balance of work and family roles.

PED also notes that a new program, the New Mexico Alliance for Fathers and Families, which is supported by the Department of Health, has as its focus “creating a culture of vibrant father engagement by advocating for needed policy changes, promoting effective programs, and attracting new resources to New Mexico.”

Background:

According to HSD, TANF awards block grants to states to provide cash assistance and educational and training programs to needy families that meet any of the program’s four goals:

1. to provide assistance to needy families so that children may be cared for in their own homes or in the homes of relatives;
2. to end the dependency of needy parents on government benefits by promoting job preparation, work, and marriage;
3. to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies and establish annual numerical goals for preventing and reducing the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
4. to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

HSD states that goal 3 allows family formation support services, which may include relationship or marriage education as well as youth-based services that encourage strong relationships and build a foundation for future healthy marriages, including abstinence and pregnancy prevention programs. In addition, goal 4 can be used to provide any service that will assist in the maintenance and formation of two-parent families. Activities under this goal may include marriage education.

HSD also notes that responsible fatherhood initiatives across the nation have resulted in the understanding that there is no one program model that is appropriate for all individuals and communities. Activities to encourage and support responsible fatherhood have emerged out of many professional disciplines and in many different program contexts.

Related Bills:

- SB 353 *Substance Abuse & Family Planning Services*
- SB 470 *Devote Funds to Family Formation Programs* (Identical)
- SM 3 “*NM Family & Parent Involvement Day*”