

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 1948

103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE GRAGG.

4758H.02I

JOSEPH ENGLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To amend chapters 9 and 210, RSMo, by adding thereto two new sections relating to fatherhood engagement.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Chapters 9 and 210, RSMo, are amended by adding thereto two new sections, to be known as sections 9.411 and 210.1150, to read as follows:

9.411. The month of June is hereby designated as "Fatherhood Engagement Month" in the state of Missouri. The citizens of this state are encouraged to engage in appropriate events and activities to raise awareness about the importance of fathers being part of their children's lives.

210.1150. 1. There is hereby established within the department of social services the "Missouri Fatherhood Engagement Project". The Missouri fatherhood engagement project shall be administered by the family support division within the department of social services. The Missouri fatherhood engagement project shall:

(1) Promote fatherhood engagement by helping fathers achieve greater self-esteem and better awareness of their responsibilities to their families and community; and

(2) Empower fathers to become successful in fatherhood engagement by building life skills and through family reunification, education and career training, employment support, and child-support compliance.

2. (1) There is hereby established within the department of social services the "Missouri Fatherhood Engagement Project Grant Program" to provide grants to agencies, programs, or nonprofit organizations that support and facilitate involvement

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

14 of fathers in the community. The family support division shall be the administrative
15 body for the implementation of the program established by this subsection.

16 (2) The family support division shall prescribe the form and the method for
17 filing grant applications; determine agencies, programs, or nonprofit organizations
18 eligible for the grant; and supervise the processing of the program. The application
19 process under this subdivision shall ensure that grant funds are used to fulfill the
20 objectives of the Missouri fatherhood engagement project under this section.

21 (3) (a) Family-focused community agencies, faith-based agencies, family
22 advocacy programs, and nonprofit organizations may apply for a grant under this
23 subsection. Agencies, programs, and organizations selected to receive a grant under this
24 subsection shall use such moneys to hire, train, and facilitate fatherhood engagement
25 project specialists.

26 (b) Fatherhood engagement project specialists shall serve as a one-on-one point
27 of contact for fathers who are seeking to reestablish and strengthen their relationships
28 with their children. Fatherhood engagement project specialists shall work directly with
29 fathers to address challenges that have caused a breakdown of their parenting
30 relationships and help fathers navigate the system to reunify with their children.

31 (c) Fatherhood engagement project specialists shall:

32 a. Serve as a liaison between fathers and any relevant state agencies or
33 organizations, including the family court system and the Missouri family support
34 division;

35 b. Assist fathers in developing and implementing personalized plans to
36 reestablish and maintain a relationship with their children; and

37 c. Provide guidance, support, and resources to fathers to help fathers overcome
38 compliance barriers with court-ordered case plans and other obstacles preventing
39 reunification with their children.

40 (d) If a father ceases to engage with or comply with a court-ordered case plan,
41 the court or family support division shall issue a referral to a partnering agency,
42 program, or nonprofit organization utilizing services from a fatherhood engagement
43 project specialist. The referring entity shall inform the agency, program, or nonprofit
44 organization that the father is no longer working toward the goal of reunification, and
45 the agency, program, or nonprofit organization shall dispatch a fatherhood engagement
46 project specialist to engage with the father. If a father requests assistance through the
47 Missouri family support division or directly to a partnering agency, program, or
48 nonprofit organization, the father shall also be eligible for assistance from a fatherhood
49 engagement project specialist.

50 3. All grants under subsection 2 of this section shall be made from funds
51 appropriated by the general assembly and any gifts, contributions, grants, or bequests
52 received from federal, private, or other sources to the Missouri fatherhood engagement
53 project grant fund established under subsection 4 of this section.

54 4. (1) There is hereby created in the state treasury the "Missouri Fatherhood
55 Engagement Project Grant Fund", which may consist of moneys appropriated to it by
56 the general assembly or any gifts, contributions, grants, or bequests received from
57 federal, private, or other sources. The state treasurer shall be custodian of the fund. In
58 accordance with sections 30.170 and 30.180, the state treasurer may approve
59 disbursements. The fund shall be a dedicated fund and, upon appropriation, moneys
60 in this fund shall be used solely as provided under subsection 2 of this section. The fund
61 shall be administered by the family support division.

62 (2) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 33.080 to the contrary, any moneys
63 remaining in the fund at the end of the biennium shall not revert to the credit of the
64 general revenue fund.

65 (3) The state treasurer shall invest moneys in the fund in the same manner as
66 other funds are invested. Any interest and moneys earned on such investments shall be
67 credited to the fund.

68 5. (1) Agencies, programs, or nonprofit organizations receiving grants under
69 this section shall be required to submit annual reports to the relevant state agency
70 detailing the use of the funds, the number of fathers engaged in the project, and the
71 outcomes achieved in terms of father-child reunification and case plan completion.

72 (2) The family support division shall establish performance metrics to measure
73 the success of the Missouri fatherhood engagement project including, but not limited to,
74 the number of fathers who successfully completed their case plans, the number of
75 father-child reunifications facilitated, and the overall improvement in father
76 involvement in the lives of children.

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