



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on April 11, 2022

## DeSantis Signs Bill to Support “Involved Fatherhood”

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed a wide-ranging bill on Monday aimed at supporting fathers in taking an active role in their children’s lives. The bill is tied to nearly \$70 million in funding for a spectrum of family and youth support.

Growing up without a father “has a severe impact on children,” said the governor in a [statement](#).

“Incredibly, there are those who diminish the importance of fatherhood and the nuclear family — we will not let that happen in our state. I am proud to say we are doing everything we can to support involved fatherhood in Florida,” he added.

The bill, [HB 7065](#), recognizes that “Families are stronger when both parents act responsibly in caring for their children. It is the intent of the Legislature to recognize and support the important and unique role that fathers play in ensuring the physical, emotional, and economic well-being of their children and families.”

To achieve that goal, the legislation directs the state’s Department of Children and Families to create and implement the so-called Responsible Fatherhood Initiative. The measure will include a social- and news-media campaign, as well as information on effective parenting through various public outlets such as print and television.

According to the bill,

The initiative must provide an opportunity for every father in the state to be able to obtain information and inspiration that will motivate and enable him to enhance his abilities as a father, recognizing that some fathers have greater challenges than others and would benefit from greater support.

The department will be required to award grants to nonprofit community organizations specializing in family matters and addressing the needs of fathers.

For example, the bill requires that grants be used to help fathers with “finding employment, managing child support obligations, transitioning from a period of incarceration, accessing health care, understanding child development, and enhancing parenting skills.”

The fund will also be geared toward providing fathers with evidence-based parenting education.

The bill notes that in prioritizing an organization’s applicants for grants, the department should consider such factors as the geographic area where the applicant lives (to include such factors as unemployment, graduation and incarceration rates, housing instability, etc.); the applicant’s involvement with the community; and organizational capacity.



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Part of the effort will be to create mentorship programs for “at-risk male students” in middle schools and high schools to help them develop “social, emotional, and cognitive skills to prepare them for future success.” The program, organized through the Department of Juvenile Justice, will include social and academic support, life-skill developments, and trauma-informed practices and interventions, if needed.

Additionally, the bill encourages the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Health, local governments, and other agencies to sponsor and organize events “to promote awareness of responsible fatherhood engagement and the contributions fathers make in the lives of their children.”

To recognize the crucial role of fathers in their children’s development, Florida designated the month of June as “Responsible Fatherhood Month.”

The law comes into force on July 1, 2022.

House Speaker Chris Sprowls said the bill was unanimously supported by both Republicans and Democrats. Indeed, the legislation enjoyed rare [bipartisan support](#) during the 2022 legislative session.

“All of us have a father story,” Sprowls said, according to the *Tampa Bay Times*. “Every person knows the value of having a present parent and a present father.”

“We cannot legislate fatherhood, accountability or character, but we can provide support for fathers to equip and encourage them to take an active role in the lives of their children,” he added in the official statement.

Tony Dungy, the Pro Football Hall of Fame coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and Indianapolis Colts, was among the attendees and speakers at the signing ceremony held at AdventHealth Training Center in Tampa, the practice and training complex for the Buccaneers.

Dungy is co-founder of [All Pro Dad](#), a national, Tampa-based nonprofit organization whose mission is “to help men love and lead their families well.”

Dungy said the bill signed by DeSantis will be “tremendous and such a big help” to fathers in Florida.

The governor’s statement includes statistics compiled by the Florida House that demonstrate the impact of fathers on children’s lives.

For instance, Florida lawmakers estimated that children born in fatherless homes are twice as likely to drop out of school. Boys raised without fathers are three times more likely to go to jail. Nine out of 10 runaway or homeless children come from fatherless homes, and so do six out of 10 kids who commit suicide.

Children who have present and positive relationships with their fathers, on the other hand, are twice as likely to get a good education and a stable job, 50 percent less likely to be depressed, and 80 percent less likely to end up in jail.

According to U.S. Census Bureau data cited by the governor, there are more than 18 million children — one in four — living in American households without a father.



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