

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 927

103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE GRAGG.

1830H.011

JOSEPH ENGLER, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

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

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 "Fathership 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 Fathership Project". The Missouri fathership project shall be administered by the family support division within the department of social services. The Missouri fathership project shall:

(1) Promote fathership 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 fathership 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 Fathership Project Grant Program" to provide grants to agencies, programs, or nonprofit organizations that support and facilitate involvement of fathers in the

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.

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

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

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

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

30 **(c) Fathership project specialists shall:**

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

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

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

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

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

53 **4. (1) There is hereby created in the state treasury the "Missouri Fathership**
54 **Project Grant Fund", which shall consist of moneys appropriated to it by the general**
55 **assembly and any gifts, contributions, grants, or bequests received from federal, private,**
56 **or other sources. The state treasurer shall be custodian of the fund. In accordance with**
57 **sections 30.170 and 30.180, the state treasurer may approve disbursements. The fund**
58 **shall be a dedicated fund and, upon appropriation, moneys in this fund shall be used**
59 **solely as provided under subsection 2 of this section. The fund shall be administered by**
60 **the family support division.**

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

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

67 **5. (1) Agencies, programs, or nonprofit organizations receiving grants under**
68 **this section shall be required to submit annual reports to the relevant state agency**
69 **detailing the use of the funds, the number of fathers engaged in the project, and the**
70 **outcomes achieved in terms of father-child reunification and case plan completion.**

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

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