

*Type of Agency/Organization Coordinating/Operating the Program:*  
State Government

*Funding Sources:*

The Jackson County Missouri Community-Backed Anti-Drug Tax (COMBAT)

*Mission/Goal of the Program:*

The Jackson County Fathering Court was designed in March 1998 to improve the life of children by unifying resources and systems that support fathers in the Jackson County community that is located in Kansas City, Missouri. This program was designed to address the financial responsibilities and emotional concerns of parents, particularly fathers. The Fathering Court program model was developed by COMBAT Administrators, Jackson County Prosecutor Family Support Division, and court staff. Moreover, the Fathering Court is aimed to affect change in the criminal justice system, fathers, children and mothers.

*Program/Services Offered:*

The program provides services to benefit fathers that are unable to maintain child support payments. Dads are afforded the possibility to participate in this court-supervised case management program as an alternative to jail. Services provided include medical and mental health, substance abuse, housing, parenting skills training, literacy training, and unemployment. Once a criminal non-support charge is filed, a case manager from the Family Support Division of the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office conducts a needs assessment by interviewing the father and custodial parent. In addition, a variety of tests are administered to adequately assess the parent for issues such as substance abuse and mental health problems. Based on the information obtained, the Family Court Commissioner reviews each case and determines if the program is appropriate for the parent. If eligible, fathers are then asked to decide if they are willing to participate in 6 to 24 months of intensive counseling in exchange for the dismissal of charges; charge dismissal is contingent on program completion.

*Results and/or Performance Measures:*

Since its development, the Fathering Court in Jackson County, Missouri has collected more than \$433,000 in child support from children who were not previously receiving payments. In the future, Fathering Court "graduates" will be tracked for one year and six months following graduation. Children of fathers who participated in the program will also be followed to assess the benefits and impact of increased financial and emotional support.

*For more information contact:*

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