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Youth, Families, Community

Extension programs help families grow stronger as they navigate life's challenges

Parenting isn't easy — and neither are a myriad of other experiences that can arise in family life. To help people navigate situations like adjusting to co-parenting after a divorce, family disagreements and end-of-life planning, Extension professionals at land-grant universities lead research-backed initiatives that strengthen families and offer support for those going through difficult circumstances.

Here are a few examples of that work:

- An **Oklahoma** program aims to teach newly separated and divorced parents how to work as a team to minimize negative effects on their children and help them adjust to the situation. Participants reported creating formal co-parenting plans, avoiding putting children in the middle of conflict and encouraging their children to have positive relationships with the co-parent. *Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service; State appropriations, County funding. See [full statement](#).*
- A program led by Extension professionals in **Mississippi** helps parents learn to create safe, nurturing environments for children who have endured maltreatment, abuse, neglect, multiple home placements and violence. Program leaders collaborate with courts and child protective services. *Mississippi State University Extension Service; Smith-Lever. See [full statement](#).*
- Two Extension programs — one in **Oklahoma** and one in **Wisconsin** — strive to strengthen fathers' parenting skills and give them a supportive space for conversations about their parenting experiences. *University of Wisconsin Extension; State appropriations. See [full statement](#). Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service; State appropriations, Smith-Lever (3b&c). See [full statement](#).*

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The National Land-grant Impacts Database (NIDB) documents the individual and collective impacts of the national Land-grant University System of joint research, education and Extension. Much of this work is supported by capacity and competitive funds through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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- In **New York**, Extension personnel started a program to raise awareness of and offer solutions to the delicate issue of rifts that divide family members. The program features training and a web platform where people can share stories of estrangement and advice for reconciliation. *Cornell Cooperative Extension*. See [full statement](#).
- **Wisconsin** Extension educators developed a series called Planning AHEAD, which includes seven modules that empower older adults to tackle the intimidating yet important task of end-of-life planning. Program participants learn about such topics as advance directives, estate planning, grief and having conversations with family members about their wishes. *University of Wisconsin Extension; State appropriations, Smith-Lever*. See [full statement](#).