

# Intergovernmental Case Processing Project

THE KLAMATH TRIBES CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

INTERGOVERNMENTAL CASE PROCESSING INNOVATION DEMONSTRATION GRANT

Funded: 2019

FINAL REPORT

December 2022

“naat ? a naal’am t’at’aksni s?os?att’iipga geeks”, “We do this for our children”

**December 2022**

Submitted by:  
The Klamath Tribes Child Support Enforcement

Submitted to:  
Office of Child Support Enforcement  
Administration for Children and Families  
Department of Health and Human Services

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## PURPOSE OF THE INTERVENTION

The goal of this project was to increase the amount of child support payments recovered and decrease the amount of time to establish cases with access to the Federal Parent Locator System (FPLS) and a Case Manager Locate Specialist. The Klamath Tribes gained access to the FPLS to increase the ability to locate parents and the efficiency of that process. The Klamath Tribes addressed security issues through a contracted security assessment and implemented required changes to the system to ensure security. Our program then gained access to FPLS.

The Klamath Tribes Child Support Services Department is focused on behavioral economics as it attempts to build relationships with all parties involved in the support of each child's well-being. Challenges collecting support and arrears include:

- Low income per capita in Chiloquin (58% lower than the national average)
- Decreased median household income in Chiloquin is 47% lower than the national average. The unemployment rate in Chiloquin is 168% higher than the national average and the poverty level in Chiloquin is 176% higher than the national average.<sup>1</sup>

The Klamath Tribe's Child Support Enforcement Program (Program) works with tribal, federal, and state partners to enhance the financial well-being of our tribal children. Over two-thirds of cases the program has handled are intergovernmental. This program locates parents, conducts DNA testing, and files and enforces support obligations. The Program collected \$96,654 in 2018. It collected \$106,754 in 2017. Child support collected was paid out to the custodial parent or caregiver, Tribal TANF, and the State of Oregon for support and arrears due. Child Support Services reported 324 open child support cases for FY 2018. About 216 were intergovernmental and very challenging for the most part. The cases are a combination of Tribal TANF, State of Oregon Child Support Enforcement, and self-referrals by tribal members. Non-tribal custodial parents may open a case with our program if they have a tribal child and a tribal noncustodial parent. Child Support Services has independent authority through Tribal law Article VII, section 1; Tribal Council By-laws Article 1 and through agreements with the Federal Government. Our program is implementing a new case management program, Child Support Information Services (CIS), specifically developed for tribal child support programs. Staff trained with the Program's developer and are inputting all cases into the existing case management data program. This case management program addresses the variables of funds collected and case processing time involved in each individual case.

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<sup>1</sup> As reported in the 2016 United States Census Bureau American Community Survey. There has not been significant growth in the economy since this census survey was reported. The three staff in the Klamath Tribes Child Support Services Department office worked daily with outdated information to locate missing parents. Staff relied on state locate requests. Information was provided one to two weeks after the initial request. At times the state files a garnishment with the employer before the tribal child support is informed of an employer and able to file the Income Withholding Order.

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## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To reach the goals of increasing child support collection by 15% per year, improving case processing time, improving customer service, increasing trust and confidence in the child support program and its processes, and improving children's financial wellbeing and quality of life, the program achieved several key accomplishments:

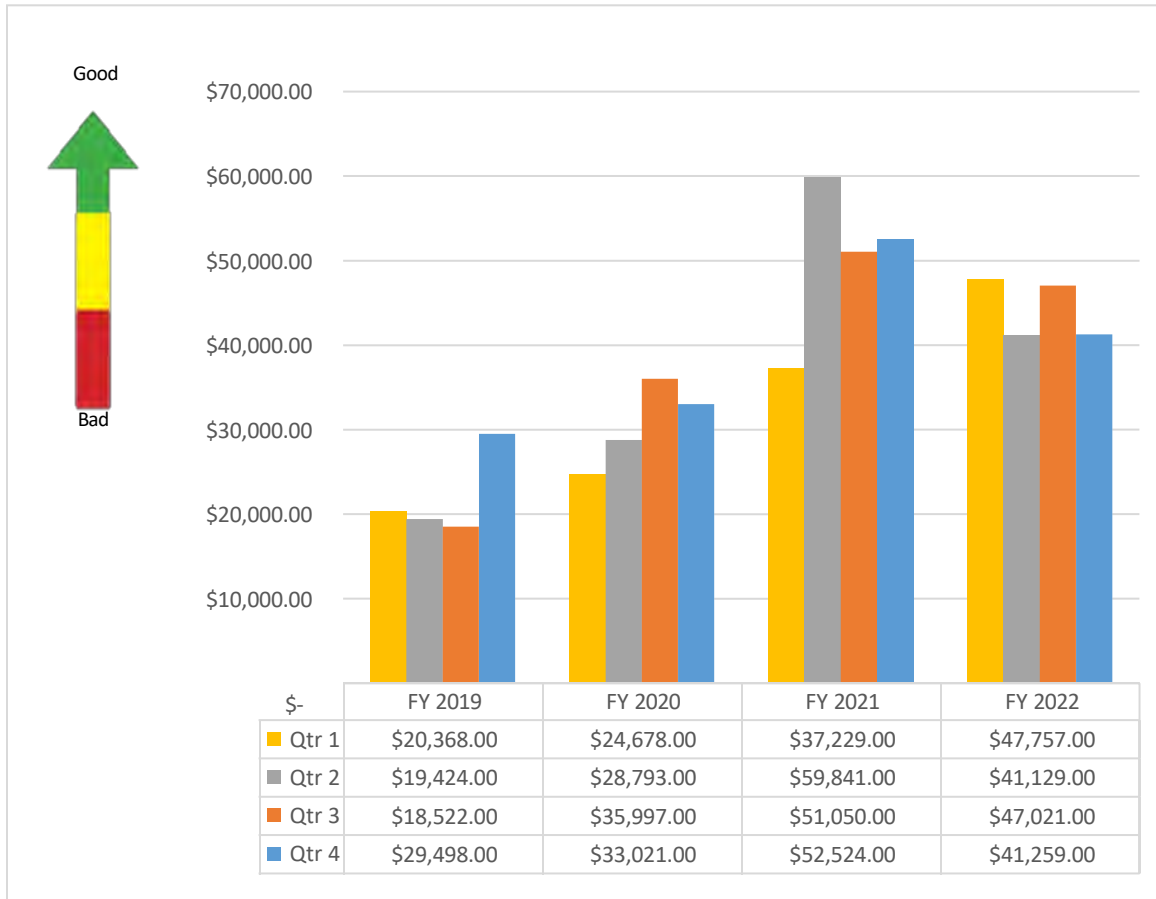
INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS
Klamath Tribal Child Support Manager/Staff  Other tribal staff support – includes Human Resources, Information Technology, Tribal Administration and Finance  New Case Management System	Organize to implement the project most effectively  Hire Case Manager Locate Specialist (will be the grant project manager)  Attend New Grantee Training  Purchase new server and computer/printer  Visit "model program"  Complete the requirements to apply to have direct access to the FPLS portal:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Contract for Assessment - Complete</li><li>2. Implement Assessment</li><li>3. Respond to assessment recommendations</li><li>4. Submit independent security assessment to OCSE. OCSE will review to determine compliance.</li><li>5. OCSE will forward security agreement and reimbursement agreement, including instructions and options to remit payment.</li><li>6. Payment: Tribal director will return signed security agreement and reimbursement agreement. Fees must be paid upon receipt of the invoice, but no later than 90 days of signing agreement.</li><li>7. Training: OCSE will contact tribe to coordinate training. OCSE will provide each tribe with technical assistance and training via webinars. Once training is completed, tribes can access the FPLS.</li></ol>	Klamath Tribes granted direct access and implement FPLS portal.

Also, program dashboards have been developed to be used as a tool for monitoring outcomes ongoing.

## DATA

To monitor and track program outcomes related to the goals of increasing the funds distributed to parents and decreasing the time required to establish cases, a visual dashboard was created to track and monitor progress.

**Table 1. Distributed Funds**



As shown in Table 1, the distributed funds increased from 2019 and 2020, with spikes in FY 2021. The aid of this dashboard will allow the program to track the increase in funds distributed over time, after the program has accessed the FPLS system consistently enough to see strong outcome differences, but with promising results already.

The other outcome being tracked using the dashboard method is the time between application for support and establishment of case. The outcomes will be consistently tracked for decrease in time to establish. The FPLS system should greatly decrease the barriers to locating parents, and should improve outcomes related to establishment time, providing financial support to children sooner, and supporting satisfaction with the program.

**Table 2. Case Establishment Time (days)**



Table 2 shows a target goal of 40 days to establishment. These numbers are greatly affected by the number of cases established in a given month, and context needs to be applied in the analysis of these numbers.

## CHALLENGES

The Klamath tribe experienced many challenges during the funding period related to the emergency arising from the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic during the waiver period.

The tribe first declared a Public Health Emergency in March of 2020 in response to the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Public Health Emergency declaration remains in effect. The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the Klamath tribal community during the waiver period, so the tribe instituted emergency policies to lessen the economic hardship to adult tribal members and decrease the transmission of COVID-19. In addition, the wildfires during the summer of 2021 greatly affected the community.

The impacts of COVID-19 and local wildfires during the waiver period limited and continues to limit the normal operations of these Departments, which has adversely affected our ability to achieve program goals. The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic during the funding

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period have affected our ability to serve the tribal community. The Klamath Tribe required all hearings on child support and paternity matters to take place via videoconferencing during the majority of the funding period to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For the same reason, tribal policy also prohibited Program staff from meeting with clients in person, and Program staff only occasionally met with clients in-person on a by appointment only basis during the waiver period. Although the advances in video conferencing and communication by phone or email has become the new normal in many circumstances, these methods of communication and court appearance remain inaccessible and difficult for some of the Program's clients to navigate. The economic and health impacts of COVID-19 also resulted in the relocation or a change in employment status of many clients, which made the Program's efforts to work with and properly serve clients with process exceedingly difficult throughout the funding period.

For the Klamath Tribe, the casino is the main source of revenue for all administrative tribal programs (child support falls under this umbrella of admin programs). The casino was closed for 4 months at the onset of the pandemic and when they reopened there were restrictions in place related to capacity. The casino never returned to the capacity of operations that it ran under pre-pandemic and continues to be closed in the evenings. The expected economic loss related to the casino because of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the wildfires which decimated parts of Oregon in 2021 to be at the least 30-40%.

The other enterprises of the Klamath Tribe – including the travel center and hotel – remained open during the pandemic, but with many restrictions in place, adding to the losses during the COVID-19 pandemic and Oregon wildfires.

Because of these financial impacts during this time, all tribal programs were affected by loss of tribal funds available to support services to membership. This impact is not isolated to the Child Support Services but included impacts throughout tribal services. As mentioned, revenues for the casino were down during the pandemic. When revenues are down, the funds made available to the tribal programs are limited. The wildfires of 2021 devastated our area, with much of the land being devastated, with the additional impact of closing Highway 97, a main thoroughfare through the local area, and closing tourism season down since the 2020 Pandemic Closures. Tourism is a main contribution to the local economy, which greatly affected revenue and added to the complications of revenue for the tribe.

Also, the impacts of COVID-19 have greatly affected the employment landscape with the Klamath Tribe, and across the country. The Child Support Program has been plagued with the common employment trends of having difficulty filling positions, needing to respond to staff illnesses with long periods of time out of the office for recovery and quarantine, creating complications with work flow issues. Because of this, it proved difficult to hire staff specific to

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working with the FPLS portal, which decreased the speed with which we saw outcomes from access to the system. Similar issues slowed work with IT in the accessing of the FPLS system.

While the original application proposed the use of a customer satisfaction survey, it was approved to move forward without conducting that part of the project, which would have been difficult to carry out given the community challenges during the funding period.

## **SUMMARY**

Despite the multiple challenges of the funding period for the Intergovernmental Case Processing Project – such as the COVID pandemic, devastating wildfires, and the staffing problems that came with them – the Klamath Tribe Child Support Program completed the challenge of gaining access to the FPLS system, which will aid in making the location of parents much more efficient, and will support the distribution of money to support children much faster. This will aid the program in reaching their goals of increasing the amount of funds distributed for the support of children and decreasing the time between application for support and the successful establishment of the case.

An example of the success of the program is locating financial information that indicated a noncustodial parent, living multiple states away, had a significantly higher income than was being reported, and supporting the program in accessing a much higher amount of support for the children in that case. Access to this kind of support will be invaluable as more cases are established and support is sought. The program will monitor outcomes closely using the dashboard system to evaluate change over time.