

# Child Support Learning Agenda:

## A Brief Synthesis of Select Child Support Literature

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A learning agenda is a set of systematically identified questions that directly relate to the work of an agency. When answered, the agency can work more effectively and foster a culture of learning and continuous quality improvement. Developing a learning agenda involves an iterative cycle of engaging with partners, identifying priority questions, conducting the activities specified in the learning agenda, and updating the learning agenda.

Knowing what questions have already been answered through existing research studies, demonstration grants, or other knowledge development activities is an important part of the learning agenda process. With this in mind, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) and the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS)<sup>1</sup>, within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), supported a review of select child support–related research to support development of a child support learning agenda (CSLA). To conduct the review, OPRE engaged the Evidence Capacity Support (EvCap) team to complete the review, including synthesizing knowledge and identifying remaining gaps.

### ACF Evidence Capacity Support: Developing a Child Support Learning Agenda

The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) and program offices at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), are partnering to extend and deepen their evidence capacity. **Evidence capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and resources that support an agency's ability to build and use evidence to make decisions and inform its work.** Through the ACF Evidence Capacity Support (EvCap) project, OPRE is building on efforts to strengthen evidence capacity at ACF and incorporating the principles of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. **The EvCap project prioritizes the learning needs of agency staff and stakeholders for information about the context, reach, implementation, performance, and impact of their programs.**

The EvCap team (Mathematica) is working with OPRE and the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) to support development of a learning agenda that will guide OCSS and OPRE research planning and execution. The engagement with OCSS will build on previous OCSS and OPRE learning activities to identify child support learning questions that may affect:

- How OCSS allocates funds
- Identification of training needs
- Opportunities for program innovation
- Identification of data sharing and system needs
- Dissemination opportunities

**The goal of this engagement is to enable OCSS and OPRE to work more effectively, efficiently, and collaboratively toward advancing their missions and supporting broader agency goals.**

<sup>1</sup> On June 5, 2023, the Office of Child Support Enforcement in the US Department of Health and Human Services changed its name to the Office of Child Support Services.

## Identifying and selecting seminal resources

OPRE and OCSS staff drew on their institutional knowledge and familiarity with federally supported research and evaluation to identify resources they deemed to be seminal to the child support field. The resources they identified included final reports from federally funded research efforts, other research and evaluation findings that have informed policy and federal research investments, cross-project analyses and syntheses of findings, technical assistance products, and existing summaries of learning to date and suggestions for future research in particular content areas. Ultimately, OPRE and OCSS identified 65 seminal resources (Appendix A shows a full list of the reviewed resources).<sup>2</sup>

### Addressing equity in the CSLA

ACF is committed to developing learning agendas that address equity within human service programs and policies. Equity has been integrated throughout all aspects of the CSLA development process, including the literature synthesis.

From October 2022 through February 2023, the EvCap team extracted high-level information from these resources with a primary focus on the background and context, findings and implications, and remaining questions. The team used this information to synthesize current learning and understanding within specific topics of the child support enforcement program.

As part of the review process, the EvCap team categorized each resource into one of six topics of the CSLA:<sup>3</sup>

1. Core child support services
2. Supportive services
3. Outreach, engagement, and customer service
4. Operations, administration, and program performance
5. Partnerships to enhance child support programming
6. Technology and data

For each topic, the EvCap team summarized major takeaways and high-level lessons learned from each resource.<sup>4</sup> To identify gaps, the EvCap team extracted and summarized any gaps or key next steps noted by the authors of each resource. In the remainder of this document, we summarize findings from the literature synthesis, providing bolded key takeaways followed by bulleted findings and citations to support them. We end each section by identifying potential directions for future evidence-building. These potential directions were developed based on the literature review as well as feedback from federal and non-federal child support experts on topics for additional examination.<sup>5</sup> A glossary of terms is available at the end of the brief (Appendix B).

## Core child support services

According to OCSS, the core responsibilities of state, tribal, and local child support programs is to locate noncustodial parents, [establish parentage](#), establish and enforce [support orders](#), [modify orders](#) when appropriate, and collect and disburse child support payments. For the CSLA, we also include approaches to addressing customer issues related to payment, ensuring safe access to services for families experiencing domestic violence, [good cause exemptions](#), and equity of child support core services.

The literature for this targeted review included resources that touched on establishment and modification of child support orders, the use of enforcement tools, and policies and practices designed to encourage

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<sup>2</sup> This brief does not cite all reviewed resources.

<sup>3</sup> As part of the development of the CSLA, the EvCap team held brainstorming workshops with federal and non-federal child support experts. Through a series of brainstorming exercises, workshop attendees identified six main topics for the CSLA. For more information about the workshops and identification of the topic areas, see this [brief](#).

<sup>4</sup> Although resources may address multiple topics, sorting resources into a single topic enabled the team to produce one synthesis per topic.

<sup>5</sup> As part of the brainstorming workshops held with federal and non-federal child support experts, participants identified questions of interest that could be examined in future research efforts.

compliance with payments.<sup>6</sup> However, other bodies of research cover additional topics related to core child support services. Key findings from the review are:

### **Ability and willingness to pay child support may influence how well enforcement actions encourage payment.**

- The effectiveness of [enforcement actions](#), such as license suspension, court hearings, or warning letters, is related to how willing and able the parent owing child support is to pay.<sup>7</sup> For example, suspending the driver's license of a parent who wants to pay child support but lacks sufficient income does not seem to improve payment behavior, whereas suspending the driver's license for a parent who has the means to pay their support but lacks willingness may motivate more child support payments.<sup>8</sup>

### **Applying insights from behavioral science to child support interventions can improve a wide range of child support outcomes but may be challenging to implement.**

- Interventions informed by [behavioral science](#) such as creating easy-to-understand materials and forms, sending appointment reminders, adopting simpler processes, and giving parents personalized support increased modification requests, payment rates, and collection rates, and reduced the number of [contempt](#) hearings.<sup>9,10,11,12,13</sup>
- Actively reaching out to child support-involved families and providing educational sessions about child support increased the likelihood of successfully modifying child support orders and reduced the number of punitive actions taken against parents who owe child support.<sup>14,15,16,17</sup>
- Behavioral interventions took longer than planned, were difficult to implement when involving organizational change management, and did not consistently improve outcomes for long-term collection.<sup>18,19,20</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The literature identified for the review focused on recent publications relating to ways to improve child support outcomes.

<sup>7</sup> Selekman, Rebekah, and Amy Johnson. "An Examination of the Use and Effectiveness of Enforcement Tools Among Six States." *Mathematica*, August 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Meyer, D. R., M. Cancian, and M. K. Waring. "Use of Child Support Enforcement Actions and Their Relationship to Payments." *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 108, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104672>.

<sup>9</sup> Richburg-Hayes, L., C. Anzelone, N. Dechausay, and P. Landers. "Nudging Change in Human Services: Final Report of the BIAS Project." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Farrell, M., C. Anzelone, D. Cullinan, and J. Wille. "Taking the First Step Using Behavioral Economics to Help Incarcerated Parents Apply for Child Support Order Modifications." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Plotnick, Robert, Asaph Glosser, Kathleen Moore, and Emmi Obara. "Increasing Child Support Collections from the Hard-to-Collect: Experimental Evidence from Washington State." *Social Service Review*, no. 89, 2015, pp. 427–454.

<sup>12</sup> Office of Child Support Services. "Lessons Learned from the BICS Demonstration Grants." Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Kusayeva, Y., and C. Miller. "Tools for Better Practices and Better Outcomes: The Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services (BICS) Project." Office of Child Support Services, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Lee, D., C.F. Weems, H.L. Rouse, J.N. Melby, F. Zhao, M. Bartel, and K. Goudy. "Targeted Child Support Enforcement and Its Association with Child Support Payments: Evidence from a Program Evaluation." *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 118, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105343>.

<sup>15</sup> Cancian, M., D. R. Meyer, and R. G. Wood. "Final Impact Findings from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Cancian, M., D. R. Meyer, and R. G. Wood. "Do Carrots Work Better Than Sticks? Results from the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration." *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2022, pp. 552–578.

<sup>17</sup> Plotnick et al. 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Groskaufmanis 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Baird, P., D. Cullinan, P. Landers, and L. Reardon. "Nudges for Child Support: Applying Behavioral Insights to Increase Collections." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Baird, P., L. Reardon, D. Cullinan, D. McDermott, and P. Landers. "Reminders to Pay: Using Behavioral Economics to Increase Child Support Payments." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015.

## Potential directions for future evidence building for core child support services:



Examine how child support programs could accept in-kind and informal child support payments and what the effects of doing so would be on family well-being and other child support–related outcomes.



Examine the extent to which there are disparities in provision of core services across racial and ethnic groups and explore ways to improve equity in core services.



Explore promising practices to increase order modifications, including better understanding how child support programs can streamline order modification processes to reduce processing time and how to better educate and support families on the processes for modifying orders.



Explore ways to improve safe access to child support for survivors of domestic violence.

## Supportive services

Beyond core child support services, child support programs can serve families in other ways. Child support programs may offer supportive services that include establishing [parenting time orders](#) and custody arrangements and offering family strengthening, employment, and other wraparound and supportive services. When child support programs cannot provide supportive services directly, they may refer families to other service agencies. Thus, this topic also includes the experience of program participants with referrals to other services and how child support programs coordinate services with other agencies.

The reviewed literature included resources that examine employment services for child support customers, establishment of parenting time orders, and [Responsible Fatherhood](#) programming. Key findings from the review are:

### **Employment services can have positive effects on child support payments, employment, and earnings, but they require flexibility, tailoring, and funding for implementation.**

- Participating in employment services, such as job placement programs and skills training, often leads to increased consistency and value of payments being made by noncustodial parents.<sup>21,22,23</sup> Additional studies show that participation in employment services also has positive effects on overall employment rates and earnings for noncustodial parents.<sup>24,25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Landers, P.A. “Child Support Enforcement-Led Employment Services for Noncustodial Parents: In Brief.” Congressional Research Service, 2020.

<sup>22</sup> Wasserman, K., L. Freedman, Z. Rodney, and C. Schultz. “Connecting Parents to Occupational Training: A Partnership Between Child Support Agencies and Local Service Providers.” Office of Child Support Services, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Sorensen, E. “Tax Credits and Job-Oriented Programs Help Fathers Find Work and Pay Child Support.” Income and Benefits Policy Center, Urban Institute, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Barden, B., R. Juras, C. Redcross, M. Farrell, and D. Bloom. “New Perspectives on Creating Jobs: Final Impacts of the Next Generation of Subsidized Employment Programs.” U.S. Department of Labor, 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Cancian, M., D.R. Meyer, R.G. Wood. “Final Impact Findings from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED).” Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2019.

- Employment services should be tailored to local context by adjusting the types and content of services delivered, recruitment approaches, and methods for sustaining program engagement to the needs of the people in the community.<sup>26,27,28</sup> Additionally, sufficient funding is needed to support employment services for child support-involved families.<sup>29,30</sup> Limited federal funding is available for child support programs to use for employment services, but some states support employment services for noncustodial parents using of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds.<sup>31</sup> However, when programs draw on multiple sources of funding, they may have to balance different requirements for approaches to outreach, enrollment, and engagement that may be attached to those funding sources.<sup>32,33</sup>

**Parenting time orders can have positive effects on child support outcomes; however, funding is limited and there are no standard processes for establishing such orders.**

- Several studies have found that creating parenting time orders had positive effects on parent-child relationships, increased parenting time for noncustodial parents, and improved relationships and communication between custodial and noncustodial parents.<sup>34</sup>
- Although parenting time orders show promise, the process of establishing them is not standardized and is typically separate from establishing child support orders. Additionally, funding to support parenting time agreements tends to be limited.<sup>35,36</sup>
- Incorporating parenting time orders into the child support process requires expanding domestic violence protocols and screening, which improves the ability of child support staff to detect domestic violence.<sup>37</sup>

**Partnerships between child support programs and Responsible Fatherhood programs can enhance each program's services and improve parents' knowledge, but programs should customize content and services to the populations they are serving.**

- Responsible Fatherhood programs may partner with child support programs to help with recruitment and provide services. Fathers participating in such programming often need child support-related assistance and lack accurate information about the child support program. However, ACF-sponsored studies of Responsible Fatherhood programs found mixed results for outcomes related to parenting skills and child support. One program that participated in an impact evaluation demonstrated improved rates of child support payment modifications among program participants. The other programs in the evaluation found no effects on child support payments,

<sup>26</sup> Noyes, Jennifer, Lisa Klein Vogel, and Lanique Howard. "Final Implementation Findings from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) Evaluation." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018.

<sup>27</sup> Wasserman et al. 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Vogel, Lisa Klein. "Challenges and Opportunities for Engaging Noncustodial Parents in Employment and Other Services." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> Brennan, E., B. Barden, S. Elkin, and A. Bickerton. "Preparing Fathers for Employment: Findings from the B3 Study of a Cognitive Behavioral Program." OPRE Report #2021-167. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Barden et al. 2018.

<sup>31</sup> McCann, M. "Children and Families: Promoting Parental Employment to Boost Child Support." National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Brennan et al. 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Barden et al. 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Office of Child Support Services. "Parenting Time Opportunities for Children Research Brief." Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Pearson, J. "Research Briefing for Child Support Program and Parenting Time Orders: Research, Practice & Partnership Project." Center for Policy Research, 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Office of Child Support Services 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Office of Child Support Services 2019.

father involvement, harsh parenting, engagement with children, parental role satisfaction, or positive parenting beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

- Families experiencing incarceration have unique needs for child support services.<sup>39, 40, 41</sup> A study of a parenting program designed for young, incarcerated fathers found that the intervention's effectiveness was not sustained when the curriculum was adapted for serving non-incarcerated fathers in a community-based setting.<sup>42</sup>

**Many states are beginning to adopt more family-centered child support policies to enhance the child support program's ability to holistically serve the family.**

- Many child support programs are incorporating supportive services into their program models to meet families where they are and work with them to address both their child support and other needs. A survey of state child support directors identified a number of ways child support programs can increase child support payments, including:<sup>43</sup>
  - o Ensuring families are the recipients of child support payments.
  - o Setting realistic and accurate child support orders.
  - o Implementing sensible debt reduction strategies.
  - o Providing employment and income supports.
  - o Providing family stabilization services.
  - o Improving equal access to justice and legal assistance.
  - o Considering criminal and legal system involvement.
- Other strategies to increase the availability of supportive services in child support programming include two-generation approaches, trauma-informed and behavioral approaches, support during financial crises, co-parenting services, parenting time orders, and strategies to guide positive child engagement.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Avellar, S., L. Shiferaw, C. Ross, and J. Lee. "Supporting Fatherhood: Final Report on the 2015 Cohort of Responsible Fatherhood Grantees." OPRE Report #2021-156. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> Fontaine, J., L. Cramer, and E. Paddock. "Encouraging Responsible Parenting Among Fathers with Histories of Incarceration: Activities and Lessons from Six Responsible Fatherhood Programs." OPRE Report #2017-02. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Fontaine, J., and E. Kurs. "Promoting the Economic Stability of Fathers with Histories of Incarceration: Activities and Lessons from Six Responsible Fatherhood Programs." OPRE Report #2017-04. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.

<sup>41</sup> Fontaine, J., J. Eisenstat, and L. Cramer. "Supporting Healthy Marriages Among Fathers with Histories of Incarceration: Activities and Lessons from Six Responsible Fatherhood Programs." OPRE Report #2017-03. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Manno, M.S., K. Harknett, B. Sarfo, and A. Bickerton. "Children and Fathers Bonding: Findings from the B3 Study of the Just Beginning Parenting Program." OPRE Report #2021-132. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Turetsky, V. "Centering Child Well-Being in Child Support Policy." Ascend at the Aspen Institute and Good+ Foundation, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Turetsky 2019.



## Potential directions for future evidence building for supportive services



Explore how child support agencies can improve availability and access to employment services.



Continue studying how employment services can best support the needs of noncustodial parents with low incomes and lead to long-lasting improvements in employment and earnings.



Explore the degree to which employment services are provided equitably. For example:

- Are noncustodial parents who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups as likely as White noncustodial parents to be offered employment services?
- Are female noncustodial parents offered employment services as often as their male counterparts?
- How are employment services tailored when providing them to tribal populations?



Deepen understanding of the different approaches child support programs take to establish parenting time orders and further examine the effect orders have on child support outcomes.



Examine the costs and benefits of providing holistic supportive services to child support customers.



Assess the technical assistance needs of child support program staff to provide supportive and holistic services.

## Outreach, engagement, and customer service

Though individuals from divorced, separated, or never-married families may apply for child support services, historically, families have become involved with the child support program through mandatory referrals due to receipt of public assistance, such as TANF. To broaden their reach and shift the public perception toward a program that strengthens families, federal, state, tribal, and local child support programs have explored ways to improve outreach, engagement, and customer service. Efforts to improve these areas include tailoring the messaging of child support program services, providing services to meet diverse family needs, improving customer satisfaction, and improving child support program equity through customer service. As many child support referrals come from other assistance programs, policies on [cooperation requirements](#) (those that participants in other assistance programs cooperate with child support as a condition of eligibility) and [pass-through](#) policies (those that specify part of child support payments go directly to the custodial parent) relate to this topic as well.

Resources in this review come from studies about digital marketing of child support programs, child support cooperation requirements, and pass-through policies.

## **Digital marketing approaches can increase awareness of child support services and enrollment.**

- Website updates and redesign increased awareness of child support services, engagement with the child support program, and in some cases, applications and enrollment.<sup>45</sup>
- Facebook advertising was more effective than other social media or streaming services platforms (such as Hulu or YouTube) at engaging customers and driving them to designated websites.
- Targeted email marketing campaigns—emails pushed to specific zip codes—were a low-cost method of marketing child support services and increasing engagement from customers.
- Having a local person of influence advertise about the program on social media (influencer marketing) was helpful in engaging hard-to-reach populations.<sup>46</sup>

## **The amount of a child support order may be unrelated to customer satisfaction with the child support program.**

- Regardless of the order amount, noncustodial fathers have reported living under the threat of penalties for noncompliance and were frustrated that not all support went to their children.<sup>47</sup> These fathers talked about a disconnect between a system that requires them to financially support their children but takes little to no action to exercise their rights to visitation. Fathers said this disconnect is inherently unjust.<sup>48</sup>

## **Cooperation requirements may be a way to bring families to the child support program, but mandated cooperation can create other obstacles to improving family well-being.**

- Cooperation requirements can connect individuals to important child support services that may help the family, but these requirements can also drive people away from seeking assistance if they have reasons to avoid involvement with the child support program.<sup>49,50</sup>
- Fear for safety is an allowable, or “good cause,” reason to not cooperate with child support, but data from OCSS indicates that over 11,000 families in the United States and its territories received a good cause exemption from cooperation requirements in 2021.<sup>51</sup> Survivors of intimate partner violence have expressed concern over their ability to cooperate with child support safely.<sup>52</sup>
- One recent study documented that Black families experience sanctions for not cooperating with child support at higher rates than White families.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For example, changing language from “apply” to “enroll” and “IV-D” to “child support” resulted in increased applications for child support services at some agencies.

<sup>46</sup> Office of Child Support Services. “Digital Marketing Project Summaries.” <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/grant-funding/digital-marketing-project-summaries>. Accessed March 20, 2023.

<sup>47</sup> Clary, E., P. Holcomb, R. Dion, and K. Edin. “Providing Financial Support for Children: Views and Experiences of Low-Income Fathers in the PACT Evaluation.” Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Clary et al. 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Roberts, P. “Child Support Cooperation Requirements and Public Benefits Programs: An Overview of Issues and Recommendations for Change.” Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, November 2005.

<sup>50</sup> Llobrera, J. “Child Support Cooperation Requirements in SNAP Are Unproven, Costly, and Put Families at Risk.” The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2020.

<sup>51</sup> Office of Child Support Services. “Preliminary Report FY 2021.” Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021. [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/fy\\_2021\\_preliminary\\_report.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ocse/fy_2021_preliminary_report.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> Office of the Inspector General. “Client Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement: Use of Good Cause Exceptions.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000. <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-06-98-00043.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> Kaplan, Kathryn, Suniya Farooqui, Jamela Clark, Emily Dobson, Rita Jefferson, Niya Kelly, Katherine Buitrago, et al. “Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Sanctioning and Child Support Compliance Among Black Families in Illinois.” *Health Affairs*, vol. 41, no. 12, 2022, pp. 1735–1743. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00746>.



## Increasing child support pass-through policies can improve child support outcomes.

- A mixed-method evaluation of a child support demonstration designed to increase child support pass-through showed that when the amount of child support being passed through to the custodial parent increased, the frequency and amount of child support payments also increased.<sup>54</sup>
- Some studies showed that parentage establishment rates, payment amount, payment regularity, and noncustodial parent participation in the formal labor market improved with increased pass-through.<sup>55,56</sup> However, one study found that the percentage of parents making payments did not change after pass-through increased.<sup>57</sup>

### Potential directions for future evidence building for outreach, engagement, and customer service



Explore promising practices for marketing child support services as holistic, family-focused services.



Explore strategies for increasing whole-family engagement in the child support program in a way that is equitable for families with different racial and ethnic backgrounds.



Further examine child support cooperation requirements:

- What is the impact of increasing pass-through on families' benefit receipt?
- What is the effect of cooperation requirements on family poverty?
- How do cooperation requirements affect family-strengthening efforts?
- How are program participants from different racial or ethnic groups affected by cooperation requirements?

## Operations, administration, and program performance

How social services programs are administered, their operational procedures, and the metrics used to measure performance are important for understanding implementation drivers. Within child support, program performance, program budgets and funding sources, approaches to staffing and training, strategies for staff communication and coordination procedures, and the content and scope of federal performance measures all affect how programs function and their ability to serve families.

Research reviewed for this topic focused on historical reports of program performance, operational challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the use of [procedural justice-informed approaches](#) to operations. However, operations, administration, and performance measures are important elements of the broader discussion of how child support programs can operate as a family-centered program.

### Performance among child support programs has improved over time.

- From 1998 to 2018, state performance improved across all performance measures, with the most dramatic improvements in establishing parentage and child support orders.

<sup>54</sup> Meyer, Daniel R., Maria Cancian, Emma Caspar, Steven Cook, Thomas Kaplan, and Victoria Mayer. "W-2 Child Support Demonstration Evaluation Phase 2: Final Report." Institute for Research on Poverty University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2003.  
<https://www.irp.wisc.edu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/csde-p2-full-report.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Colorado Department of Human Services. "Evaluating the Effect of Colorado's Full Child Support Pass-Through Policy." n.d.

<sup>56</sup> Colorado Department of Human Services n.d.

<sup>57</sup> Passarella, L.L., and L. Hall. "Child Support Pass-Through: Early Outcomes in Maryland." University of Maryland School of Social Work. October 2021.

- From 2002 to 2011, the number of states meeting the upper threshold of parentage establishment increased from 38 to 49.
- From 2002 to 2016, the median rate of establishing orders increased from 73 percent to 87 percent.
- For most states, collections on current support and [arrearage](#) remains the lowest-performing measure.<sup>58</sup>

## **Child support programs adapted to address operational challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- Operational challenges among child support programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic include office and court closures, transitions to remote services, unreliable internet and phone access for participants, increased demands on staff and temporary staff reassignments, and the need to provide safe remote services to people experiencing domestic violence.<sup>59,60</sup>
- Procedural justice-informed interventions addressed many pandemic-related challenges by helping staff engage participants, maintain contact, and provide valuable information and support.<sup>61</sup>
- Programs developed remote learning communities to foster staff learning and peer connection during the pandemic. Promising practices for creating successful remote learning communities for staff include spending time to prepare a clear and engaging agenda, building in time for attendees to connect with peers from different offices, and meeting regularly to keep momentum.<sup>62</sup>

Child support programs continue to navigate the operational challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Forthcoming work sponsored by the [Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation](#) and the [Office of the Inspector General](#) is examining how child support programs are moving forward from the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Implementing procedural justice-informed interventions requires staff training and changing office culture.**

- Implementing procedural justice-informed interventions requires ongoing staff training, as these approaches to case management can be time-intensive for staff.<sup>63</sup>
- To support effective implementation of procedural justice-informed interventions, program leaders must cultivate a culture of learning, sharing knowledge, and support.<sup>64</sup>

## **Partnerships to enhance child support programming.**

Partnerships between child support programs and other public and community organizations can help child support agencies provide holistic services to families that can improve customer experience and program outcomes. Partnerships can exist at the federal, state, and local levels and require varying degrees of coordination and collaboration.

<sup>58</sup> Benson, V.H., and R. Webster. "The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act at 20: Examining Trends in State Performance." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> Baird, P., M. Hayes, S. Henderson, and T. Johnson. "Procedural Justice Principles in the Midst of a Major Disruption." MDRC, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Conduent. "Child Support During the Pandemic and Beyond." National Child Support Enforcement Association, 2021.

<sup>61</sup> Baird 2020.

<sup>62</sup> Wulfsohn, S., Z. Rodney, and R. Buhrmann. "Connecting Staff and Strengthening Training with Remote Learning Communities." MDRC, 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Rodney, Z. "Incorporating Strategies Informed by Procedural Justice into Child Support Services: Training Approaches Applied in the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) Demonstration." Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Rodney 2019.

## Potential directions for future evidence building for operations, administration, and program performance



Explore the funding, training, and technical assistance needs of state and tribal child support programs.



Examine balance between cost-effectiveness and child support program outcomes.



Explore how child support policies, processes, and practices may reinforce inequities within the child support system and explore potential changes to promote equity.

Reviewed resources focused on partnerships to serve noncustodial parents and fathers, though these resources offer lessons applicable to partnerships in general. Research from the OCSS-sponsored [Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security \(SAVES\) demonstration](#) on partnerships to support child support-involved families with histories of family violence is forthcoming and will add to this body of literature.

### **Defining clear partnership agreements and drawing on diverse funding sources help child support programs form and maintain meaningful partnerships.**

- Partnerships range from those in which a lead agency has a contractual relationship with another agency to fill a specific role, to more integrated partnerships where multiple agencies take an active role in providing core program services.<sup>65</sup>
- Partnering agencies should work together to:
  - Clearly define processes and procedures to regulate the partnership and manage service delivery
  - Develop plans for data sharing across organizations
  - Find ways to build buy-in and support staff<sup>66, 67, 68</sup>
- States can use TANF and [TANF Maintenance of Effort](#) dollars to enhance their ability to partner with employment, relationship, and parenting skills services providers.<sup>69</sup>
- [Child support incentive funds](#) offer another way to support partnerships. Although regular child support funds cannot be spent on job services for noncustodial parents or on fatherhood supports, child support incentive funds encourage these efforts.<sup>70</sup>

### **Partnering with child support programs can help partner agencies better engage parents and improve outcomes for participants.**

- Child support programs can help partner agencies reach their focal population, thereby supporting outreach and recruitment efforts. These partnerships also benefit the child support program by

<sup>65</sup> Avellar, S. "Forging Effective Responsible Fatherhood Partnerships: A Research-to-Practice Brief." National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. n.d.

<sup>66</sup> Avellar n.d.

<sup>67</sup> Avellar n.d.

<sup>68</sup> Avellar n.d.

<sup>69</sup> Pearson, Jessica, Patricia Littlejohn, Stephen Yarborough, Kim Dent, Susan Brown, and Rob Pierson. "Including Fathers in State Programs and Policies: Why Child Support Agencies Should Play a Leadership Role & Availability of FRPN Planning Grants." National Child Support Enforcement Agency, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Pearson et al. 2018.

connecting families with supportive services, such as employment services.<sup>71</sup> Societal benefits of child support partnerships with social service programs include reduced use of TANF, unemployment insurance, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.<sup>72</sup>

#### Potential directions for future evidence building for partnerships to enhance child support programming



Examine best practices for establishing and maintaining effective partnerships.



Explore ways to evaluate and measure child support program partnerships.

## Technology and data

The ability of social services programs to monitor and measure program performance relies heavily on the capacity of their data systems. Technological innovation combined with enhanced data can improve program efficiency and program outcomes. Reviewed resources addressed the use and collection of data within child support programs and ways to improve data systems.

### **Innovative use of existing program data provides opportunities to modernize child support programs.**

- Improving the performance of child support programs is possible using historical child support data in innovative ways. For example, programs can use predictive analytics to help identify cases that may face challenges and then intervene to prevent missed payments.<sup>73</sup>
- Child support programs could draw on existing data to create more advanced [case segmentation](#) based on underlying factors that affect ability and willingness to pay, allowing caseworkers to help parents overcome obstacles to paying. By using [smart case assignment](#), child support programs can match the best-equipped caseworker to a case based on their knowledge and experience.<sup>74</sup> Case managers could also use data to inform which enforcement tools to use, based on parent characteristics, to identify compliance actions that may be most effective for an individual.

### **Investment in staff training may improve the quality of data collection.**

- An analysis of administrative data found that voluntary parentage affidavits were rejected by the health department most often because of minor errors, including incorrect or missing information or issues with identification information in the form or attached to the form. The study recommended improving training on filling out the form and obtaining the necessary identification, as well as making edits to the outreach checklist.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Avellar n.d.

<sup>72</sup> Pearson et al. 2018.

<sup>73</sup> White, J., M. Bean, T. Fishman, and J. O'Leary. "Nextgen Child Support: Improving Outcomes for Families." Deloitte University Press, 2016. [https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/3652\\_Next-gen-child-support/DUP\\_Next-gen-child-support.pdf](https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/3652_Next-gen-child-support/DUP_Next-gen-child-support.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> White et al. 2016.

<sup>75</sup> Weems, C., H. Rouse, J. Melby, S. Jeon, K. Goudy, B. McCurdy, and A. Stanek. "A Partnership Approach to Paternity Establishment: Child Welfare Research and Training Project Ecological Model and Preliminary Data." *The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2020, pp. 180–89.

## Potential directions for future evidence building for technology and data



Examine how child support programs may use data for program improvement.



Determine how to use technology and data to explore questions of measurement, including:

- What data could programs use to update performance measures? How can programs use technology to measure customer satisfaction?
- What data will help programs better understand customer satisfaction?

## Developing more child support knowledge

This was a targeted literature synthesis, which included select research and resources. However, OCSS, OPRE, and the EvCap team acknowledge that there is considerable research, institutional knowledge, and practice wisdom beyond the reviewed resources. The CSLA will incorporate both this literature synthesis and input from federal and non-federal child support experts, practitioners, researchers, and families to identify pressing questions to the child support field. Taken together, ACF will develop learning questions that, when answered, will enhance the child support program.

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## Connect with OPRE



## Appendix A:

### List of all resources reviewed for the CSLA



Citation	Purpose/description
<b>Core child support services</b>	
Aharpour, D., L. Ochoa, J. Stein, and M. Zukiewicz. "State Strategies for Improving Child Support Outcomes for Incarcerated Parents." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020.	This brief was informed by semi-structured discussions with 10 state child support agencies, as well as a scan of publicly available information related to child support and incarcerated parents. The authors identified four key strategies used to identify and connect with incarcerated parents with child support orders: (1) establish data exchanges with state and local criminal justice agencies, (2) collect information from other sources to identify incarcerated parents, (3) leverage partnerships with justice agencies to connect with incarcerated parents, and (4) partner with workforce and employment programs to encourage child support payments among recently incarcerated parents.
Bowling, Kevin, Jennell Challa, and Di Graski. "Improving Child Support Enforcement Outcomes with Online Dispute Resolution." <i>Trends in State Courts</i> . National Center for State Courts, 2019.	This article describes a test of online dispute resolution tools to reduce the occurrence of contempt hearings and improve compliance with child support orders. These tools include text notifications, invitations to meet with child support staff to discuss ability to pay and to develop a payment plan, and text reminders for upcoming contempt hearings. The evaluation used a pre-post design, examining county administrative data on current support collections, number of contempt hearings, and number of child support-related warrants. The study suggests positive outcomes for collections and reductions in contempt hearings and child support-related warrants after implementing the online dispute resolution tools.
Cancian, M., D.R. Meyer, and R.G. Wood. "Do Carrots Work Better Than Sticks? Results from the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> , vol. 41, no. 2, 2022, pp. 552–578.	This article used administrative and survey data from the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) study to analyze whether the enhanced child support services improved child support, employment and earnings, and parenting outcomes (when compared to a treatment-as-usual group). The authors estimated program effects using regression models that adjust for small differences that may have arisen by chance or due to survey nonresponse. Additionally, the authors conducted sensitivity analyses to examine the robustness of the confirmatory impact estimates. In general, CSPED impacts withstood the sensitivity tests. The study also reports findings of a structural equation model of paths to increased compliance and determined that those in the extra-services group did receive more services; those who received more services had higher program satisfaction; and those with higher satisfaction did comply more.
Cancian, M., D.R. Meyer, R.G. Wood. "Final Impact Findings from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2019.	In 2012, the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) awarded grants to child support agencies in eight states (18 implementation sites) to enroll and randomly assign noncustodial parents to received enhanced child support services. Over the three-year recruitment period, the study enrolled 10,161 participants. The impact study drew on three main data sources: a baseline survey with all sample members, a 12-month follow-up survey with a subset of participants, and administrative data. Authors found that the CSPED group had increased the amount of child support, employment, and parenting services received by participants and reduced the likelihood of punitive enforcement actions.
Clary, E., P. Holcomb, R. Dion, and K. Edin. "Providing Financial Support for Children: Views and Experiences of Low-Income Fathers in the PACT Evaluation." Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.	The Parents and Children Together (PACT) qualitative analysis study included two rounds of interviews (n = 87, n = 59) with a sample of fathers who had enrolled in the PACT project. Most fathers interviewed were nonresident, African American fathers with high rates of economic instability. This study found that fathers owing different amounts of child support tended to feel differently about the child support system—with many of them fearing or living with penalties. Across the levels of child support obligations, fathers felt a disconnect between financially supporting their children and having limited access.

Citation	Purpose/description
Farrell, M., C. Anzelone, D. Cullinan, and J. Wille. "Taking the First Step Using Behavioral Economics to Help Incarcerated Parents Apply for Child Support Order Modifications." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014.	This study tested the Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency (BIAS) project, which aims to get incarcerated noncustodial parents on the pathway that leads to modifying a child support order by sending modified behaviorally informed reminder materials. The authors found, through a randomized controlled trial, that the intervention increased the percentage of parents who sent in a completed modification application by 11 percent. However, the authors cautioned this is only the first step of an order modification; they did not study longer-term outcomes.
Glosser, A., D. Cullinan, and E. Obara. "Simplify, Notify, Modify: Using Behavioral Insights to Increase Incarcerated Parents' Requests for Child Support Modifications." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016.	This study randomly assigned 827 noncustodial incarcerated parents to a control or BIAS group. The BIAS group received a sequence of behaviorally informed materials that included necessary paperwork, a tip sheet, and electronic reminders. The intervention increased the percentage of parents requesting a modification from 9 percent to 41 percent. The percentage of parents receiving a modification to their child support orders increased by 16 percent.
Kane, Jennifer, Timothy Nelson, and Kathryn Edin. "How Much In-Kind Support Do Low-Income Nonresident Fathers provide? A Mixed-Methods Analysis." <i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i> , vol. 77, no. 3, 2015, pp. 591–611.	Researchers interviewed 367 lower-income, noncustodial fathers to estimate the total value of all child support provided—including the total value of in-kind support—and examined child and father covariates associated with the level of in-kind support. The authors found that visitation frequency, relationship with mother, child's age, and father demographics all affected the frequency and amount of financial support. The authors suggested future research into in-kind support to ensure that child support of any form benefits children.
Lee, D., C.F. Weems, H.L. Rouse, J.N. Melby, F. Zhao, M. Bartel, and K. Goudy. "Targeted Child Support Enforcement and Its Association with Child Support Payments: Evidence from a Program Evaluation." <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i> , vol. 118, 2020.	This study assessed the impact of a targeted child support enforcement initiative, Projecting Positivity Promotes Positivity and Cultural Change, and noncustodial parents' support payments. The study used de-identified child support collections data for a difference-in-difference analysis to estimate the effects of the intervention on noncustodial parents' child support payment behavior. The intervention consisted of training frontline staff to communicate with noncustodial parents in a positive way, providing frontline staff with cases to follow up on, and having frontline staff take proactive steps, such as phone calls and emails, to communicate with noncustodial parents about paying their child support. The study suggests positive outcomes for child support payments among participating noncustodial parents.
Mage, Caroline, Peter Baird, and Cynthia Miller. "A New Response to Child Support Noncompliance: Introducing the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt Project." MDRC, 2019.	This brief describes the development of the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) intervention, which OCSS created to adapt and apply principles of procedural justice to child support compliance efforts. The brief describes the four key elements of the PJAC: case assessment, outreach and engagement, case conference, and case management and services.
McDaniel, M. T. Woods, E. Pratt, and M.C. Simms. "Identifying Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Human Services a Conceptual Framework and Literature Review." National Child Welfare Workforce Institute, 2017.	The authors reviewed about 350 articles to identify what the literature concluded about a number of racial and ethnic disparities in human services programs. Findings suggest that although most studies did not calculate disparities systematically, both internal and external factors can lead to racial and ethnic disparities in access, treatment, and outcomes in relation to Administration for Children and Families (ACF) programs. The child support program was one of the ACF programs included in this review.

Citation	Purpose/description
Meyer, D.R., M. Cancian, and M.K. Waring. "Use of Child Support Enforcement Actions and Their Relationship to Payments." <i>Children and Youth Services Review</i> , vol. 108, 2020.	This study used an administrative data sample of 21,208 noncustodial fathers, where 11,783 were nonpayers of child support (did not make payment for at least two consecutive months). The authors focused on enforcement actions and timing and found that warning letters, notices of intent to suspend licenses, court hearings, and holding noncustodial parents in contempt of court were all associated with a statistically significant increase in the likelihood of making at least one payment. Conversely, suspending licenses did not show a statistically significant increase in payments and was sometimes related to a lower likelihood of payments.
Moore, Q., R. Selekman, A. Patnaik, and H. Zaveri. "How Low-Income Fathers in Responsible Fatherhood Programs Perceive and Provide Financial Support for their Children: Summary Brief." Parents and Children Together, 2020.	This brief reports findings from the PACT impact and qualitative study on how noncustodial parents in the participating responsible fatherhood programs feel about the child support program and how their child support–related outcomes are affected by participating in PACT.
Nelson, T., and K. Edin. "‘Whatever They Need’: Helping Poor Children Through In-Kind Support." In <i>Confronting Inequality: How Policies and Practices Shape Children's Opportunities</i> , edited by L. Tach, R. Dunifon, and D. L. Miller (pp. 119–140). American Psychological Association, 2020. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/0000187-006">https://doi.org/10.1037/0000187-006</a> .	In this study, authors conducted in-depth interviews with 429 noncustodial fathers with low incomes. Interviews focused on many aspects of the fathers' lives. In this chapter, the authors identified key aspects of the formal child support system that trigger fathers' negative responses. The authors also described the aspects of informal (that is, cash directly to the mother) and in-kind support that strengthen the father–child bond.
Plotnick, Robert, Asaph Glosser, Kathleen Moore, and Emmi Obara. "Increasing Child Support Collections from the Hard-to-Collect: Experimental Evidence from Washington State." <i>Social Service Review</i> , no. 89, 2015, pp. 427–454.	This study tested whether assigning noncustodial parents to a special unit of caseworkers dedicated to intensively pursuing collections in arrears-only cases with exclusively state-owed debt (the TANF 16 intervention) was effective for collecting arrears from noncustodial parents. This study also tested whether sending regular billing statements to noncustodial parents new to the child support system and not subject to wage withholding (the statement intervention) increased the regularity and amount of payment. The study found that although the TANF 16 intervention did improve collections, the statement intervention was ineffective.
Richburg-Hayes, L., C. Anzelone, N. Dechausay, and P. Landers. "Nudging Change in Human Services: Final Report of the BIAS Project." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.	This final report summarizes the results from 15 tests of the BIAS intervention across 15 state and local agencies. Tests of the behavioral interventions demonstrated statistically significant increases in order modification requests by incarcerated noncustodial parents, and increases in payment rates on existing child support orders were statistically significant in half of the study sites.
Selekman, Rebekah, and Amy Johnson. "An Examination of the Use and Effectiveness of Enforcement Tools Among Six States." <i>Mathematica</i> , August 2019.	This study describes the variation in how six state and local child support agencies use enforcement tools to collect child support from noncustodial parents. Child support directors and national policy experts reported that there is not a clear relationship between state use of enforcement tools and child support collection rates. However, respondents reported that automatic income withholding and tax refund intercepts are the most effective tools, and that effectiveness is largely determined by parents' willingness and ability to pay child support.

Citation	Purpose/description
Treskon, Louisa, and Melanie Skemer. "Civil Contempt of Court for Child Support Noncompliance at the PJAC Demonstration Sites." MDRC, 2021.	This brief explains which noncustodial parents the six PJAC study sites referred to civil contempt, based on both federal child support guidelines and other eligibility criteria commonly applied by those agencies. The brief describes the standard contempt proceedings for control group members and the procedural justice-informed contempt adaptations implemented for noncustodial parents assigned to the treatment group.
Turetsky, Vicki, and Maureen Waller. "Piling on the Debt: The Intersections Between Child Support Arrears and Legal Financial Obligations." <i>UCLA Criminal Justice Review</i> , vol. 4, no. 1, 2020.	This article dissects child support policies that contribute to the debt burden of disadvantaged parents. The authors identified policy efforts that address the causes and consequences of accruing unmanageable debt and recommend policy changes that would prioritize children's well-being. Some of the recommendations include stopping suspending driver's licenses of low-income parents for child support nonpayment and developing specialized outreach and case management strategies for incarcerated and unemployed parents.
<b>Supportive services</b>	
Antelo, L., and A. Waters. "Illicit Substance Use and Child Support: An Exploratory Study." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, June 2019.	This study investigated the link between substance use disorders among noncustodial parents and child support payments. Literature from the past 10 years and interviews with 18 experts suggested that substance use disorders among noncustodial parents are not a primary focus of research or practice. The authors noted that substance use may make maintaining employment and child support payments more difficult and requires further study.
Antelo, L., A. Benton, L. Chadwick, and A. Vandenberg. "Housing Instability for Noncustodial Parents: Policy Considerations." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.	This report reviewed existing research on improving housing stability among noncustodial parents and examined the relationship between housing instability and noncustodial parents in the child support program using the Transfer Income Model (TRIM3). The TRIM3 is a microsimulation model that uses data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey. The authors noted that although research is sparse, many parents owing child support may struggle with housing instability. They suggest policy recommendations such as rent-setting policies that consider child support orders and lifting administrative enforcement actions.
Avellar, S., L. Shiferaw, C. Ross, and J. Lee. "Supporting Fatherhood: Final Report on the 2015 Cohort of Responsible Fatherhood Grantees." OPRE Report #2021-156. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.	This report describes findings about recruitment activities, characteristics of clients, services and implementation, and client experiences from 15 Responsible Fatherhood grantee evaluations. Local evaluations included descriptive methods and impact evaluations. The descriptive evaluations offered a deep dive into questions of interest to the programs, including on responses to recruitment strategies, strategies for retaining fathers in services, and fathers' satisfaction with the program. Six of the eight impact evaluations used random assignment to form program and comparison groups. Two of the local impact evaluations used quasi-experimental methods to match the program and comparison groups. These studies established equivalence of the program and comparison groups at baseline. The local evaluations found that fathers reported improvements in parenting by the end of a program, such as increased contact with their children, and engaging in more age-appropriate activities. By the end of the program, father's economic well-being and general well-being also improved, and most clients self-reported that the program helped them a lot.

Citation	Purpose/description
Barden, B., R. Juras, C. Redcross, M. Farrell, and D. Bloom. "New Perspectives on Creating Jobs: Final Impacts of the Next Generation of Subsidized Employment Programs." U.S. Department of Labor, 2018.	This study focused on the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD) intervention and analyzed whether it effectively increased participants' positive outcomes across three domains—employment, child support, and criminal justice. The ETJD study used a rigorous random assignment research design to evaluate seven transitional job programs. Each site randomly assigned 500 people to the program group and 500 people to the control group. This report provides impact estimates for the pooled group of all seven ETJD programs, a pooled group of four programs that specifically focused on noncustodial parents, a pooled group of three programs that focused on formerly incarcerated people, and impact estimates for each program separately. The report distinguishes between findings that provide conclusive evidence of program impact and findings that are exploratory, suggesting program impact.
Brennan, E., B. Barden, S. Elkin, and A. Bickerton. "Preparing Fathers for Employment: Findings from the B3 Study of a Cognitive Behavioral Program." OPRE Report #2021-167. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.	The Building Bridges and Bonds Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Justice Involved Individuals Seeking Employment (CB-Emp) study enrolled 752 fathers from 2016 to 2018 and randomly assigned these fathers to either a group receiving usual fatherhood program services or a group receiving usual services plus the CBI-Emp curriculum. The implementation study includes data from survey responses collected from fathers at enrollment, interviews and focus groups with staff and participants, program observations, surveys of staff members, and program operations data. The impact analysis drew on survey data collected from fathers at the time of study enrollment, follow-up survey data collected six months later, and administrative data. The authors found that across six prespecified primary outcome measures, the CBI-Emp curriculum was not effective.
Cancian, M., D.R. Meyer, R.G. Wood. "Final Impact Findings from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2019.	In 2012, the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) awarded grants to child support agencies in eight states (18 implementation sites) to enroll and randomly assign noncustodial parents to received enhanced child support services. Over the three-year recruitment period, the study enrolled 10,161 participants. The impact study drew on three main data sources: a baseline survey with all sample members, a 12-month follow-up survey with a subset of participants, and administrative data. Authors found that the CSPED group had increased the amount of child support, employment, and parenting services received by participants and reduced the likelihood of punitive enforcement actions.
Cancian, M., D.R. Meyer, and R.G. Wood. "Do Carrots Work Better Than Sticks? Results from the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration." <i>Journal of Policy Analysis and Management</i> , vol. 41, no. 2, 2022, pp. 552–578.	This article used administrative and survey data from the CSPED study to analyze whether the enhanced child support services improved child support, employment and earnings, and parenting outcomes (when compared to a treatment-as-usual group). The authors estimated program effects using regression models that adjust for small differences that may have arisen by chance or due to survey nonresponse. Additionally, the authors conducted sensitivity analyses to examine the robustness of the confirmatory impact estimates. In general, CSPED impacts withstood the sensitivity tests. The study also reports findings of a structural equation model of paths to increased compliance and determined that those in the extra-services group did receive more services; those who received more services had higher program satisfaction; and those with higher satisfaction did comply more.

Citation	Purpose/description
Cancian, M., S. Cook, M. Seki, and L. Wimer. "Interactions of the Child Support and Child Welfare Systems: Child Support Referral for Families Served by the Child Welfare System." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2012.	This study investigated the association between child support and child welfare involvement for families with children in out-of-home placement (OHP). The study used Wisconsin administrative data from the child welfare system and the child support system. The sample consisted of 2,857 resident mothers who had at least one child in OHP, with no co-residing father at time of placement. The authors found little variation between parental earnings and probability of amount ordered to offset public costs, which suggests the child welfare system is not very sensitive to parents' ability to pay. The study also found that cases that faced orders were more likely to have longer spells of OHP.
Clemens, E., A. Sheesley, and L. Davis. "Transforming Colorado's Child Support Services to a Two-Generation Approach: Lessons Learned from Implementing an 11-County Pilot Study." Report No. 104A. Center for Policy Research, 2019.	This pilot study worked with 11 local child support offices in Colorado to identify how well they were implementing 10 key indicators of the 2Gen Child Support Services Transformation Project. The study included site visit interviews, focus groups, program observations, and provision of technical assistance. The authors noted that it is critical to ensure readiness across all areas of implementation before launching, from state and county leadership to caseworker staffing and training.
Cummings, D., and D. Bloom. "Can Subsidized Employment Programs Help Disadvantaged Job Seekers? A Synthesis of Findings from Evaluations of 13 Programs." OPRE Report #2020-23. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020.	This meta-analysis synthesized findings from 12 randomized controlled trials of 13 subsidized employment programs, 11 of which included a cost study. This report focused on findings from the impact studies, each of which randomly assigned eligible individuals to receive access to the subsidized jobs programs or to a control group that did not have such access. The evaluations found that subsidized employment programs can improve employment, earnings, and other outcomes for a variety of populations. The report also includes implementation study findings as context for the impact study findings. Impact studies drew on various data sources including staff and participant interviews. The authors noted that some programs did have lasting increases in which the benefits may outweigh the costs to society, it is unlikely any of the programs saved the government money.
Fink, B. "Findings from In-Depth Interviews with Participants in Subsidized Employment Programs." OPRE Report #2018-120. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.	This report presents the findings from in-depth interviews with over 80 ETJD and Subsidized and Transitional Employment Demonstration (STED) participants from 11 programs. About half of the participants participated in three interviews: about one-quarter completed two interviews, and about one-quarter completed one. Interviewers remained in contact with participants for approximately seven months. The groups interviewed included individuals recently released from prison, unemployed noncustodial parents behind in child support payments, recipients of TANF, and disconnected youth. The interviewers found that participants were hopeful at the beginning of the program, but most participants could not turn their subsidized work experiences into unsubsidized jobs, and those who could were employed in low-wage jobs without benefits.
Fontaine, J., and E. Kurs. "Promoting the Economic Stability of Fathers with Histories of Incarceration: Activities and Lessons from Six Responsible Fatherhood Programs." OPRE Report #2017-04. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.	This brief discusses the economic stability activities implemented by the six Community-Centered Responsible Fatherhood Ex-Prisoner Reentry pilot programs. Authors suggested five recommendations for practitioners, including casting a wide net to find partners that can help the population become more employable and demonstrating a willingness to advocate for the reentry population.



Citation	Purpose/description
Fontaine, J., J. Eisenstat, and L. Cramer. "Supporting Healthy Marriages Among Fathers with Histories of Incarceration: Activities and Lessons from Six Responsible Fatherhood Programs." OPRE Report #2017-03. Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.	This brief is about how the six Community-Centered Responsible Fatherhood Ex-Prisoner Reentry pilot programs work to support participants' marital, romantic, and co-parenting relationships. Recommendations included making partner interaction activities targeted and meaningful, considering funding for services that address partner needs, and demonstrating a willingness to work with partners on family reunification as they are ready.
Fontaine, J., L. Cramer, and E. Paddock. "Encouraging Responsible Parenting Among Fathers with Histories of Incarceration: Activities and Lessons from Six Responsible Fatherhood Programs." OPRE Report #2017-02. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2017.	This brief presents the implementation evaluation findings of the activities and services provided by the six Fatherhood Reentry programs funded by the Office of Family Assistance (OFA). Data for this study came from reviews of program materials and documents, bimonthly teleconferences with core program staff, site visits to observe staff-selected program operations and activities, semi-structured interviews with program staff and stakeholders, and participant focus groups. The authors included recommendations for practitioners: "(1) Leverage the opportunities present in the prerelease and post release environments; (2) Use a range of parenting activities that give fathers several tools to help reunify with their children; (3) Address fathers' economic stability needs as part of the child/family reunification process; (4) Cultivate child/family-friendly environments in institutions by establishing strong relationships with correctional staff."
Landers, P.A. "Child Support Enforcement-Led Employment Services for Noncustodial Parents: In Brief." Congressional Research Service, 2020.	This brief discusses how Child Support Enforcement (CSE) led employment programs to identify eligible noncustodial parents, approach recruitment, and provide services. It also explains federal funding options for CSE-led programs and a literature review of CSE-led program effectiveness. Across articles, employment programs for noncustodial parents have not shown consistent impacts, highlighting the need for more rigorous evaluations.
McCann, M. "Children and Families: Promoting Parental Employment to Boost Child Support." National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019.	This report presents the findings of a scan of state policies and programs providing employment services to noncustodial parents and ways that these programs might increase child support payments. The review found that OCSS and OFA can work together to help families achieve self-sufficiency. The review also found that using TANF dollars for employment services to noncustodial parents in the child support program is a promising practice for improving parental employment among child support-involved families.
McCormick, M., B. Sarfo, and E. Brennan. "Promising Practices for Strengthening Families Affected by Parental Incarceration: A Review of the Literature." OPRE Report #2021-25. Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.	The research team analyzed 110 articles from 2007 to 2018 that related to strengthening families involved in the criminal justice system. Researchers identified six key areas for family strengthening programs: (1) engaging non-incarcerated caregivers, (2) considering children's ages in program design, (3) considering a parent's gender and role, (4) engaging in cross-system collaboration, (5) implementing strategies to engage parents who are incarcerated and their families, and (6) promoting families' financial stability. They concluded that more research is needed, as only seven programs improved at least one outcome in an impact study involving a comparison group.
Manno, M.S., K. Harknett, B. Sarfo, and A. Bickerton. "Children and Fathers Bonding: Findings from the B3 Study of the Just Beginning Parenting Program." OPRE Report #2021-132. Office of Planning, Research, and	The B3 Just Beginning study enrolled 738 fathers from 2016 to 2018 and randomly assigned them to receive either services as usual or services as usual plus the Just Beginning intervention. The implementation study included data from surveys of fathers at enrollment, interviews and focus groups with staff and participants, observations of program services, a staff survey, and program operations data. The impact analysis drew on surveys of fathers at the time of

Citation	Purpose/description
Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.	enrollment and six months later. Results suggest that the Just Beginning intervention was not more effective than services as usual for strengthening father-child relationships in this population.
Mellgren, L., T. McKay, J. Landwehr, A. Bir, A. Helburn, C. Lindquist, and K. Krieger. "Multi-Site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting and Partnering." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation and Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human, 2017.	This brief presents the findings on pre- and post-incarceration wages and child support participation in five impact sites of the Multi-Site Family Study on Incarceration, Parenting, and Partnering. This analysis included 1,548 men and 1,231 women enrolled in the study who were matched with administrative data from state child support agencies. Researchers presented descriptive statistics on wages, child support orders, child support payments, and arrears. They also used paired t-tests to explore differences among smaller samples of participants. Findings showed that both pre- and post-incarceration earnings were not enough to avoid poverty. Child support arrears increased substantially during incarceration.
Noyes, Jennifer, Lisa Klein Vogel, and Lanikue Howard. "Final Implementation Findings from the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) Evaluation." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2018.	This report presents the implementation findings from CSPED. The implementation analysis used multiple sources and methods to collect a mix of qualitative and quantitative information about CSPED including semi-structured staff interviews, web-based staff surveys, data on program participation, a baseline survey of program applicants, participant focus groups, and program documentation.
Office of Child Support Services. "Parenting Time Opportunities for Children Research Brief." Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.	The Parenting Time Opportunities for Children (PTOC) pilot tasked grantees to increase the number of new parenting time orders established in their sites. The pilot required each PTOC site to contract with an independent evaluator to conduct process and impact evaluations. No sites were able to randomly assign parents to a treatment or control group. Local evaluations included descriptive elements, mostly focused on program implementation and parent participation in program services. Most local sites described how program services affected the amount of time children spent with the noncustodial parent, and some evaluations examined whether PTOC influenced payment of child support. The authors concluded that PTOC appeared to positively affect parent-to-parent and parent-to-child relationships, as well as increases in parenting time for noncustodial parents. There were also small increases in child support compliance.
Pearson, J. "Research Briefing for Child Support Program and Parenting Time Orders: Research, Practice & Partnership Project." Center for Policy Research, 2013.	This brief synthesizes various research about family violence safeguards including telephone conversations with administrators of the State Access and Visitation Grant programs, a review of 20 state and local child support websites, and interview and focus groups with a range of child support, parenting time, and domestic violence professions in five states. The authors discussed pros and cons of multiple services such as self-help resources, mediation and facilitation, universal notification, and comprehensive services.
Selekman, R., and L. Antelo. "Coordinating Parenting Time and Child Support: Experiences and Lessons Learned from Three States." Mathematica, 2020.	This report presents the findings of interviews with state and local child support programs and court systems across five jurisdictions. Interviews focused on how parenting time orders are implemented in practice and what lessons the employees have learned. In all jurisdictions, child support staff were permitted to explain to parents the terms and effects of parenting time orders but could not give legal advice. Interviewees also reported limited funding available to establish and enforce parenting time. The authors suggested that policymakers consider ways to better fund these tasks.

Citation	Purpose/description
<p>Sorensen, E. "Tax Credits and Job-Oriented Programs Help Fathers Find Work and Pay Child Support." Income and Benefits Policy Center, Urban Institute, 2013.</p>	<p>This report summarizes the evaluation of New York's Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative. The study used data from the New York Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the New York Department of Taxation and Finance, and data from pilot program management information systems. From 2006 to 2009, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was extended to noncustodial parents. The study used regression discontinuity design to estimate the impacts of receiving the noncustodial parent EITC on employment and child support payment behavior. At the same time, noncustodial parents were eligible to participate in an employment program to help improve earnings. Only 141 noncustodial parents received the noncustodial parent EITC and participated in the employment program. Findings of the study were positive and significant, raising the amount of child support parents paid in full by 1.1 percent.</p>
<p>Turetsky, V. "Centering Child in Child Support Policy." Ascend, Aspen Institute, 2020.</p>	<p>Interviews with state child support directors identified innovative approaches to increasing child support payments. Findings indicated that many states are adapting more family-centered policies, such as setting more realistic and accurate child support orders, providing family stabilization services, and implementing debt reduction strategies. The author listed several policies and practices that could be implemented to build stronger families and support child well-being.</p>
<p>Vogel, Lisa Klein. "Challenges and Opportunities for Engaging Noncustodial Parents in Employment and Other Services." Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 2019.</p>	<p>This report presents findings related to barriers to compliance with child support orders among noncustodial parents, as identified through interviews conducted for the CSPED evaluation and for the Child Support Policy Research Agreement between the Institute for Research on Poverty and the Wisconsin Bureau of Child Support. The study had a qualitative component, which aimed to identify and describe barriers to compliance from the perspective of staff who provide services to noncustodial parents; and a quantitative component, which examined the relationship between these barriers and engagement in services intended to help noncustodial parents overcome them. The primary data source for the qualitative component was interviews with CSPED service providers across all eight grantees. When feasible, the study triangulated these data with web-based surveys with CSPED staff, other CSPED analyses, and with interviews conducted with child support agency and court staff from five Wisconsin counties. For the quantitative component, the study drew on the barriers identified by staff to predict levels of service engagement. The study used data from the CSPED survey and administrative data to test these models.</p>
<p>Wasserman, K., L. Freedman, Z. Rodney, and C. Schultz. "Connecting Parents to Occupational Training: A Partnership Between Child Support Agencies and Local Service Providers." Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021.</p>	<p>This study presents implementation study findings from the Families Forward Demonstration (FFD). The implementation study included interviews with child support agency staff and program partners, interviews with participants, survey data collected at the time of enrollment, and data from service providers about program participation. The study followed participants for six months after enrollment for all sites and 12 months after enrollment for a subset of sites. The FFD model demonstrated promising practices for connecting parents to jobs in their career path and improving compliance with child support.</p>
<b>Outreach, engagement, and customer service</b>	
<p>Cancian, M. D.R. Meyer, and J. Roff. "Testing New Ways to Increase the Economic Well-Being of Single-Parent Families: The Effects of Child Support Policies on Welfare Policies."</p>	<p>This paper presents the findings of an administrative data analysis that examined the impacts of disregard and pass-through policy on parentage establishment, child support collections, and the average dollar amount of child support collected. The authors found that disregard policy is associated</p>

Citation	Purpose/description
Discussion Paper 1330-07. University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty, October 2007.	with increasing parentage establishment and that disregard policy can increase collections.
Colorado Department of Human Services. "Evaluating the Effect of Colorado's Full Child Support Pass-Through Policy." n.d.	This paper presents the findings of an evaluation of the Colorado Full Child Support Pass-Through policy, which allowed all child support payments made to families receiving TANF to stay with family, rather than being retained by the government to recoup the costs of providing assistance to the family. The study drew on interview data from key stakeholders and a difference-in-difference model to estimate the effect of this policy change. The study found that the pass-through policy led to families receiving an average of \$167 more a month and an increase in percentage of payments made.
Meyer, D.R., M. Cancian, E. Casper, S. Cook, T. Kaplan, and V. Mayer. "W-2 Child Support Demonstration Evaluation Phase 2: Final Report." University of Wisconsin-Madison, Institute for Research on Poverty, July 2003.	<p>This report presents the results of the second phase of the Wisconsin Works (W-2) CSDE. From September 1997 through June 1999, most cases entering W-2 were assigned to receive a full pass-through of any child support paid, but a randomly selected control group was assigned to receive a reduced amount. These assignments remained in place until July 2002. This report presents results for two cohorts of cases: Cohort 1 cases entered during the first three calendar quarters of the experiment, and Cohort 3 cases entered during the sixth and seventh quarters of the experiment. Because some additional implementation training took place before the entry of Cohort 3 cases, comparing the early and later cohorts enabled the authors to assess the effects of a more fully implemented program.</p> <p>The study found that children in the full pass-through group were more likely to have parentage established than those in the control group, and a greater percentage of mothers in the full pass-through group both had child support paid on their behalf and received child support. The study also found that additional training provided to caseworkers did not improve their understanding of the pass-through policy and the experiment.</p>
Office of Child Support Services. "Digital Marketing Project Summaries." Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d. <a href="https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/grant-funding/digital-marketing-project-summaries">https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/grant-funding/digital-marketing-project-summaries</a> . Accessed March 20, 2023.	In September 2018, OCSS awarded Section 1115 grants for the Digital Marketing project to 12 state and two tribal child support agencies. These two-year grants allowed grantees to test digital marketing approaches and partnerships to reach parents who could benefit from child support services and to create or improve two-way digital communication and engagement with parents.
Office of Inspector General. "Client Cooperation with Child Support Enforcement: Use of Good Cause Exceptions." U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 2000. <a href="https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-06-98-00043.pdf">https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/oei-06-98-00043.pdf</a> .	This report describes six states' use of good cause exceptions, which exempt TANF clients from requirements to cooperate with child support enforcement. The authors gathered survey responses and reviewed documents from 99 local child support and 103 local public assistance offices and interviewed 180 managers and caseworkers to understand the implementation strategies and experiences about TANF client cooperation. Three key findings arose: (1) few requests for good cause are made and there are virtually no fraudulent claims; (2) there are a variety of reasons and disincentives responsible for the low number of requests; and (3) most local offices make efforts to preserve client safety, but the efforts vary. The authors also provided a set of recommendations to increase client safety and cooperation.

Citation	Purpose/description
<p>Passarella, L.L., and L.A. Hall. "Child Support Pass-Through: Early Outcomes in Maryland." University of Maryland School of Social Work, October 2021.</p>	<p>This report focuses on Maryland's recent pass-through policy and explores its early outcomes. The authors analyzed pre-post administrative data to examine the effects the child support pass-through policy had on the percentage of TANF cases with open child support cases, current support orders, and payments. The authors also examined the percentage of child support payments that were distributed to custodial families and the state. The study found that more money went to TANF families immediately after the implementation of Maryland's pass-through policy, but not all indicators of child support compliance improved during the initial months of implementation.</p>
<p>Selekman, R., and P. Holcomb. "Child Support Cooperation Requirements in Child Care Subsidy Programs and SNAP: Key Policy Considerations." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.</p>	<p>This brief examines use of child support cooperation requirements in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child care subsidy programs. For this study, researchers reviewed policy documentation and interviewed SNAP, child care, and child support program directors about their use of cooperation requirements. The authors found that 23 states require child support cooperation for child care subsidy recipients, and seven states require it for SNAP recipients. Additional research is needed to create a data tracking source to compile information on the use of child support cooperation requirements and examine how these requirements are implemented at the state and local levels.</p>
<b>Operations, administration, and program performance</b>	
<p>Baird, P., D. Cullinan, P. Landers, and L. Reardon. "Nudges for Child Support: Applying Behavioral Insights to Increase Collections." Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016.</p>	<p>This study reports the findings of four tests of behavioral interventions to reduce bottlenecks within the existing child support payment system, including redesigned payment notices, text message reminders, and a new welcome letter. All tests used a random assignment research design to compare a program group or groups sent intervention materials with a control group sent status quo materials. Findings show that two of the four interventions improved the likelihood of payment by about 2.4 percent.</p>
<p>Baird, P., L. Reardon, and D. Cullinan. "Reminders to Pay: Using Behavioral Economics to Increase Child Support Payments." Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2015.</p>	<p>This study tested two low-cost payment reminder interventions for parents who did not have automatic income withholding for child support. The study used a fractional factorial design to test the effectiveness of providing payment reminders with different due dates, using robocalls for payment reminders, pairing payment reminders with robocalls, and redesigning payment reminders with simplified language and easy-to-follow instructions. Findings were modest with few statistically significant improvements, except that 2.9 percent more parents made at least one payment over four months.</p>
<p>Baird, P., M. Hayes, S. Henderson, and T. Johnson. "Procedural Justice Principles in the Midst of a Major Disruption." MDRC, 2020.</p>	<p>This brief focuses on the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) intervention and describes how the COVID-19 pandemic affected PJAC project sites and parents served. Data for this brief came from interviews with program staff. The authors identified numerous challenges faced by programs during COVID-19, including unreliable internet and phone service, court closures, and temporary staff reassignments. Staff experiences suggest that applying procedural justice principles to case management can help agencies weather unexpected events.</p>

Citation	Purpose/description
Benson, V.H., and R. Webster. "The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act at 20: Examining Trends in State Performance." Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018.	This brief analyzed data reported annually to OCSS, for all states and the District of Columbia, from 2002–2016. Four trends stood out since the implementation of the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act: "(1) States continue to make strides across performance measures, (2) State variations in performance persist, but differences have narrowed across most measures, (3) States made dramatic gains in parentage and order establishment, with half of states achieving performance ceilings for both measures, and (4) Collections on current support and arrears remain a challenge for nearly all states."
Conduent. "Child Support During the Pandemic and Beyond." National Child Support Enforcement Association, 2021.	This virtual event was conducted with a group of state child support directors and aimed to identify common topics for further consideration for child support programs, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though COVID-19 affected states differently, all were able to successfully reconceptualize their program operations to serve their customers. Many staff felt that emergencies such as COVID-19 serve as an opportunity to accomplish changes that were previously unlikely and that challenges will continue to evolve and be met.
Groskaufmanis, Jacqueline. "Integrating Procedural Justice Principles into Child Support Case Management: How Staff Members Experienced the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) Demonstration." MDRC, 2021.	The PJAC demonstration randomly assigned 11,000 noncustodial parents to receive procedural-justice informed case management or case management as usual. This brief focuses specifically on interviews and surveys with PJAC staff members. The interviews reflected that some case managers did not feel that the training was useful, while others saw positive effects. Case managers also varied on their opinion of the resulting workload: one-third found the workload was unmanageable, one-third found it occasionally manageable, and one-third found it manageable.
Kusayeva, Y., and C. Miller. "Tools for Better Practices and Better Outcomes: The Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services (BICS) Project." Office of Child Support Services, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.	This project addressed challenges to establishing, enforcing, and modifying child support orders through 22 interventions that use behavioral science principles. The authors found that the interventions could make parents more likely to respond to outreach, attend in-person meetings, submit required forms, and make initial payments on new orders. The interventions were also inexpensive to implement, although they led to only modest effect sizes.
Office of Child Support Services. "Lessons Learned from the BICS Demonstration Grants." Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019.	This document reports the experiences of the eight BICS grantees, the benefits of BICS interventions for parents, and the variety of ways that programs have applied behavioral strategies.
Rodney, Z. "Incorporating Strategies Informed by Procedural Justice into Child Support Services: Training Approaches Applied in the Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt (PJAC) Demonstration." Procedural Justice-Informed Alternatives to Contempt, 2019.	This brief describes the training provided to child support case managers as they prepared to implement procedural justice into their work with parents. Case managers received training in the five central elements of procedural justice: respect, understanding, voice, neutrality, and helpfulness. Training included in-person foundational sessions, learning-community webinars, and monthly case-analysis calls with OCSS and PJAC staff members and supervisors.



Citation	Purpose/description
Wulfsohn, S., Z. Rodney, and R. Behrmann. "Connecting Staff and Strengthening Training with Remote Learning Communities." MDRC, 2020.	This report shares advice from experienced practitioners for setting up and using remote learning communities in the B3 and PJAC studies. Remote learning communities are peer groups that meet regularly by connecting online and via video and telephone conferencing, to work toward shared learning objectives in a structured virtual environment. The three key steps explained in the report are (1) prepare, (2) build in time to make connections, and (3) maintain momentum.
<b>Partnerships to enhance child support programming</b>	
Avellar, S. "Forging Effective Responsible Fatherhood Partnerships: A Research-to-Practice Brief." National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse, Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.	This brief summarizes the Strengthening Families Evidence Review (SFER), a systematic review of family-strengthening programs serving people with low incomes. This includes 90 studies of 70 Responsible Fatherhood programs, which highlighted promising practices for forming and maintaining partnerships. The analysis identified three types of partnerships: (1) contractual partnerships, (2) supplemental partnerships, and (3) integrated partnerships. Partnering with the child support enforcement system stood out as a particularly beneficial relationship.
Pearson, Jessica, Patricia Littlejohn, Stephen Yarborough, Kim Dent, Susan Brown, and Rob Pierson. "Including Fathers in State Programs and Policies: Why Child Support Agencies Should Play a Leadership Role & Availability of FRPN Planning Grants." National Child Support Enforcement Agency, November 1, 2018.	In this presentation, child support experts describe motivation for why child support enforcement agencies should lead efforts to include fathers in state programs and policies. Leaders from various child support programs presented on relevant topics based on what their programs are doing to engage fathers in their programming.
<b>Technology and data</b>	
Weems, C. F., H. Rouse, J. Melby, S. Jeon, K. Goudy, B. McCurdy, and A. Stanek. "A Partnership Approach to Paternity Establishment: Child Welfare Research and Training Project Ecological Model and Preliminary Data." <i>The Journal of Contemporary Social Services</i> , vol. 10, no. 2, 2020, pp. 180–189.	This study analyzed electronic records from the Bureau of Health Statistics of voluntary parentage affidavits (VPAs) that the Iowa Department of Public Health rejected. Most of these records were rejected due to minor errors (78.2 percent), most of which were related to proof of identity. These findings suggest that improving outreach and training related to accurate completion of the VPA—and training on the forms of identification needed—could improve the parentage establishment process.
White, J., M. Bean, T. Fishman, and J. O'Leary. "Nextgen Child Support: Improving Outcomes for Families." Deloitte, 2016.	This report describes five ways child support programs could use existing data to improve program performance: (1) predictive analytics; (2) case segmentation: appropriate outreach, communications, and enforcement that matches circumstances; (3) data-driven enforcement; (4) smart case assignment: matching the right worker to the right cases; and (5) nudging for better outcomes. The authors recommended revising policies to be more modern, draw on existing data, and improve the employee experience.

Appendix B:

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Arrears	Past due, unpaid child support owed by the noncustodial parent. Parents who are behind on child support payments are said to be “in arrears”.
Behavioral interventions	Based on work in economics, psychology, and other social sciences, behavioral science illustrates that even small program challenges can create large hurdles to participation for the people the programs are designed to serve. Behavioral science offers several principles that can help improve program design and operational efficiency such as simplification, personalization, use of prompts, loss aversion, identity priming, reminders and follow-ups, dates and deadlines, and social influence.
Case segmentation	Case segmentation allows agencies to group cases based on key criteria and apply different remedies to similar cases, matching appropriate consequences to specific circumstances. Advances in data analytics have allowed for far more effective forms of segmentation. Advanced models can analyze not just variables such as willingness and ability to pay, but also the underlying factors that affect these variables. They go one level deeper to pinpoint factors that keep parents from being able to pay, so caseworkers can help them overcome those obstacles. This allows caseworkers to craft different solutions that not only are tailored to the unique needs of cases, but also have the best chance of succeeding.
Child support incentive funds	Incentive funds are additional funding that child support programs may receive from the federal government for meeting specific program performance measure benchmarks. Incentive funds may be used for other activities not eligible for federal financial participation, if these activities will contribute to improving the effectiveness or efficiency of the state's child support program and are approved by the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
Child support order	The document that sets (1) an amount of money that a parent is to provide for the support of the parent's child(ren) and/or (2) the responsibility to provide health insurance or medical support for the child(ren). This amount or responsibility must be established by court order or administrative process, voluntary agreement (in states or tribes where such agreements are filed in the court or agency of the administrative process as an order and are legally enforceable), or other legal process. It may include a judgment for child support arrears.
Contempt of court	When noncustodial parents fall behind on child support payments, they can be held in civil contempt (that is, noncompliance with a court order), which often results in judges ordering purge payments (lump sum payments to avoid civil contempt), community supervision or probation, and even jail time.

Term	Definition
Cooperation requirements	Applicants for certain types of public assistance (for example, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families [TANF], and in some states, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program [SNAP], or child care) are automatically referred to their state or tribal child support agency, which will identify and locate the noncustodial parent, establish parentage where appropriate, and obtain child support payments. This allows the state or tribe to recoup or defray some of its public assistance expenditures with funds from the noncustodial parent and may enable the custodial party to become self-sufficient. Failure to cooperate with the child support program may result in loss of some or all public assistance received by the custodial parent <sup>76</sup> .
Enforcement actions	The application of remedies to obtain payment of a child or medical support obligation contained in a child or spousal support order. Examples of remedies include garnishment of wages, seizure of assets, liens placed on assets, revocation of licenses (for example, drivers, business, medical), denial of U.S. passports, contempt of court proceedings, and so on. Enforcement actions are processes used to collect payments from the noncustodial parent or to require compliance with some other provision of the order.
Good cause exemption	A legal reason for which a TANF recipient is excused from cooperating with the child support enforcement process, such as past physical harm by the child's noncustodial parent. It also includes situations where rape or incest resulted in the conception of the child and situations where the mother is considering placing the child for adoption.
Order modification	The child support agency automatically reviews the support orders in TANF cases at least once every three years to determine if a change, or modification, to the child support order is necessary. In non-TANF cases, the child support agency will provide notice to either parent or custodian of their right to request a review of their child support order at least once every three years. However, either party may request a review for order modification at any time based on a substantial change in circumstances.
Parenting time, parenting time orders	A structured, formal agreement that specifies the amount of time each parent spends with their child(ren). Parenting time orders are developed outside of the formal child support system but, in some states, child support staff might facilitate them. Currently, there is no systematic or consistent mechanism for families to establish parenting time agreements for a child whose parents were not married at the time of their birth.

<sup>76</sup> Some states may require noncustodial parents who are receiving SNAP benefits to also cooperate with child support as a condition of eligibility.

Term	Definition
Pass-through	Provision by which states can disburse part of a child support payment collected on behalf of a public assistance recipient instead of keeping the funds to reimburse the state and disregard the payment in determining eligibility for assistance. Tribal programs also have a choice in adopting pass-through. Pass-through is also known as child support “disregard.”
Parentage establishment	The legal establishment of parentage for a child, either by court determination, administrative process, tribal custom, or voluntary acknowledgment. A parentage acknowledgment involves the legal establishment of parentage for a child through a voluntary acknowledgment signed by both parents as part of an in-hospital or other acknowledgement service.
Procedural justice–informed interventions	Procedural justice–informed interventions aim to improve the perception of fairness in processes that resolve disputes and result in decisions. Procedural justice–informed interventions employ respect, understanding, voice, neutrality, and helpfulness to working with noncustodial parents who are not meeting their child support obligations.
Responsible Fatherhood programming	Responsible Fatherhood programs provide services that support fathers in their roles as major influences in their children’s lives. These programs aim to help fathers create loving, nurturing relationships with their children and be actively involved in their lives.
Smart case assignment	Analytics and segmentation can help match cases to the caseworkers who are best equipped to handle them. Managers can direct workers to focus attention on cases with the most significant potential for collections. In cases where the parent is unlikely to pay, caseworkers can intervene early by establishing a nonfinancial obligation, modifying the support amount according to state guidelines, or referring the paying parent to appropriate social services agencies.
TANF	The TANF program provides states and territories with flexibility in operating programs designed to help low-income families with children achieve economic self-sufficiency. States use TANF to fund monthly cash assistance payments to low-income families with children, as well as a wide range of services.
TANF Maintenance of Effort	As a condition of receiving federal TANF funds, states must spend a certain amount of their own funds (maintenance of effort, or MOE funds) on TANF-allowable categories. These include basic assistance; work, education, and training activities; child care; program management; refundable tax credits; child welfare services; and more.