

Child Support Report

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The federal child support program has strengthened families for 40 years – four decades, for children, for families.



**Mark Greenberg, Acting Assistant Secretary,
Administration for Children and Families**

Reprint from [ACF Family Room Blog](#)

August is Child Support Awareness Month when we recognize the critical role that child support plays in children's lives and applaud those parents who provide financial support to their children. 2015 is also the 40th anniversary of the child support program and during those 40 years, ACF's Office of Child Support

Enforcement (OCSE) has partnered with states to collect child support payments that increase family income.

Today, nearly 16 million children receive services from a state or tribal child support program. In fact, 1 in 4 children in the U.S. has an active child support case. The reach and positive impact of timely and consistent child support on the stability and self-sufficiency of these families is critical. All children deserve financial and emotional support from both their parents, whether or not parents are living together.

Over the past 40 years, the child support program has undergone continuous innovation and improvement, including funding and implementing robust, interconnected and secure computer systems that locate parents and their assets and efficiently enforce support obligations. Last year, thanks in part to those innovations, the national child support program distributed \$28 billion in child support collections to families. We have also worked to establish and streamline interstate and interjurisdictional child support processes and engage employers in this mission. Over 70 percent of the child support collected is now obtained through payroll deductions. The child support program continues to be one of the most cost-effective government programs, collecting \$5.25 in child support for every dollar spent to run the program.

Originally, the federal Child Support Enforcement program began with a principal focus on welfare "cost recovery," i.e., families receiving cash assistance were required to assign their child support collection rights to government, and most child support recovered was used to reimburse government for public assistance costs. Over time, the role of the child support program has changed dramatically. Today, 95 percent of payments collected through the Child Support Enforcement system are distributed to families and only 5 percent are used to reimburse government for public assistance costs.

Over the past 40 years, families have become more complex and diverse and the labor market has changed in important ways. Today, more than 40 percent of children are born outside of marriage. Most women now work outside the home, and the types of

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Grandparent's Day is Sep. 13



Read about an innovative program that helps grandfamilies in the [May CSR](#)

California commemorated Child Support Awareness Month in August with a radio and television ad campaign. Look for more awareness month event coverage in the September [Child Support Report](#)



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jobs available to less educated workers also have changed. Parents also face an array of challenges that inhibit their ability to pay, including incarceration rates that have quadrupled over the past four decades. To help meet the varied needs of families, the child support program is implementing family-centered strategies that help parents overcome barriers to making timely and consistent payments. For example, a number of states are now integrating employment services for noncustodial parents within their child support program. The program is also increasing opportunities for noncustodial parents to have parenting time with their children.

At ACF, we're continuing to build on the success of the child support program and listening to stakeholders for innovative ideas to better serve families. Later this year, OCSE will release a Report to Congress reflecting what was heard in listening sessions with stakeholders across the country earlier this year. The report will describe the effectiveness and performance of the program, and identify new tools and approaches that could improve and shape the program in the future.

We thank the thousands of dedicated child support professionals at the county, state, territorial, tribal, and federal levels who work every day on behalf of children and families.

HHS Secretary Burwell, @SecBurwell, recognized the efforts of the child support workers on Twitter during the 40th Anniversary of the Child Support Program! HHS has many social media accounts, including one for the Administration for Children and Families, @ACFHHS. There is a searchable list on the [HHS Social Hub](#).

COMMISSIONER'S VOICE



VOICE BLOG

40 years of progress: Technology and innovation

This year is the 40th anniversary of the national child support program. Check out our [40th Anniversary infographic](#) on our website to see some of the ways we've changed!

Thanks primarily to technology and proactive income withholding and collections have increased from less than \$1 billion to \$28 billion, and our cost-effectiveness ratio has increased from \$3.25 to \$5.25 over the past four decades. Today, 75 percent of collections are made through payroll deductions. By the end of the year, almost all child support programs will use our centralized electronic income withholding (e-IWO) process through OCSE's child support portal, under new legislation enacted by the Congress last fall.

One of the great things about the child support program is that we continue to innovate. Our portal applications include two of our more recent tools:

The first is **Lump Sum Reporting**: our centralized automated process that enables employers to provide information about employees who are eligible to receive a bonus or lump sum payment. As of July 2015:



- Forty-nine states and territories receive notifications from employers using Lump Sum Reporting, and
- More than 130 employers are participating, representing over 1,500 Federal Employer Identification Numbers.

The second is **Terminations** (or, as we call it, **eTerm**): our centralized, automated process that enables employers to notify states about an individual's employment status. As of July 2015:



- Forty-five states and territories receive notifications from employers using eTerm, and
- More than 130 employers, with over 1,500 Federal Employer Identification Numbers, are participating.

Some of you may remember the days when income withholding orders sent to employers were handwritten. Today, employers expect to receive the OMB-approved Income Withholding for Support form to withhold child support and to send payments to a centralized state disbursement unit. In 2011, OCSE included language in the IWO instructions for employers to reject orders when they are not on the OMB-approved form or do not direct payment to a state disbursement unit.

With four decades of experience, the national child support program continues to excel. Our forward momentum depends upon modern technology and innovative strategies to respond to the needs of today's families.

Read on to find out how child support programs are continuing to improve.

Vicki Turetsky

Improving technology and improving customer service

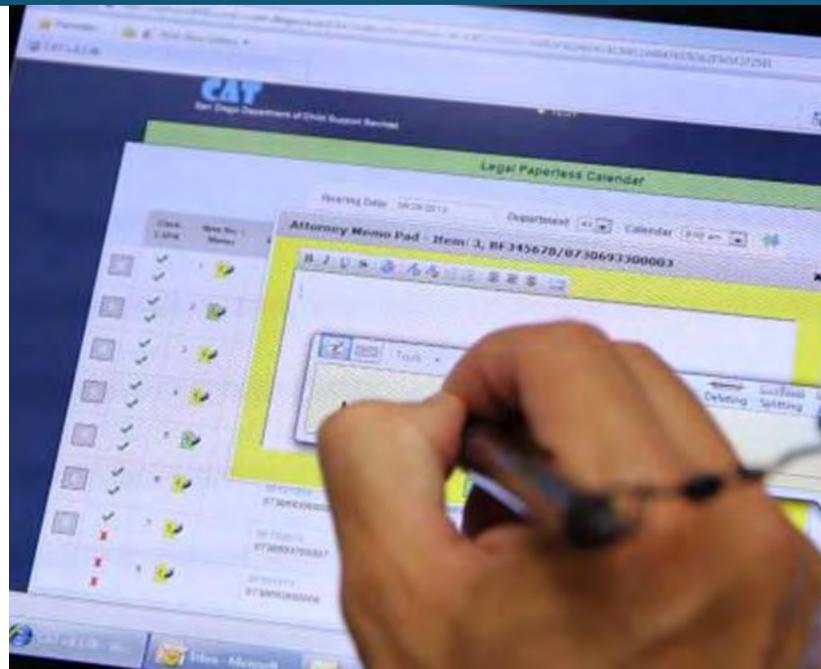
**George Chance, Regional Administrator,
California Department of Child Support
Services**

Performance management is a critical component for any organization and it is especially true for the California child support program. We encourage staff to continually improve the effectiveness of the services they provide to our customers while balancing program costs within a fixed budget. By modernizing our case management system, using technology in innovative ways, and fostering effective collaborative relations with our court partners, we strengthen our capacity to operate a quality, cost-effective child support program.

There is no unified court in California, which presents a challenge. The state constitution mandates that each of the 58 counties has a superior court that hears both civil and criminal cases as well as family cases and others. This judicial organizational structure requires child support programs to work out local solutions with local court partners. As solutions prove successful and gain acceptance at the local level, managers assess the solution framework for wider application and implementation statewide. The California Department of Child Support Services, in partnership with local child support agencies (LCSAs), has identified three such models.

Riverside County (Southern California)

The LCSA and the county superior court implemented an advanced e-filing solution to manage legal documents. Child support staff and court partners met in 2001 to develop a two-way exchange of case document data and images. The project initially included the Summons and Complaint form set and has now expanded to include thirteen e-filed form sets. The data exchange occurs by



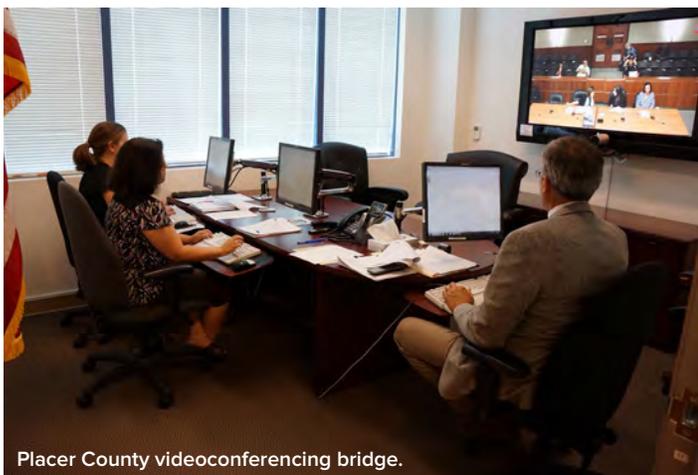
using Extensible Markup Language (XML) that also embeds PDF document form sets within the XML wrapper. The record and its form sets are stored within the child support enforcement automation system until the daily secure data exchange with the Riverside County Superior Court.

Once received, the court processes the data through its electronic case management system and places an electronic file stamp, date of filing, and judicial signature on the document. Updated fields within the original XML record and the updated PDF are stored within the court's data network storage area until the court transfers all processed cases back to the child support system. Once a day, the system uploads the data and overwrites the original PDF with the updated image. The child support staff then view and print the updated case information and filed images.

The process provides an integrated workflow that speeds up child support case filing, reduces potential for document error, eliminates misrouting of documents, reduces the need for paper records, eliminates the need to make copies, and removes the need to physically transport documents. There are no more wait times for accessing copies from the court because we maintain electronic documents, including images, and have them available to staff within 48 hours. This process also eliminates the need for staff to image documents, which allows them to complete other duties.

San Diego County (Southern California)

In this county, child support and county superior court officials developed the Child Support Legal Paperless System so clerical and legal staff would not have to develop paper litigation files. The overarching goal was to reduce the time it took to prepare almost 17,000 paper case files annually for court hearings as well as to improve customer service. The solution has saved thirty minutes of prep time per case. It has also improved customer service because customers do not have to wait on the day of their court



Placer County videoconferencing bridge.

hearing for the paper files to arrive.

The application's ability to seamlessly integrate several disparate, multi-agency systems was a key component because it improved efficiencies in the court calendar process and resulted in annual savings of more than \$330,000. Presently, San Diego County is 98 percent paperless for all child support court proceedings. The state has adopted the system and will make it available to all LCSAs and their court partners in 2015.

Placer County (Northern California)

In Placer County, officials have established a videoconferencing bridge between the courthouse and the local child support office. LCSA staff first developed the 1058 Window Project after a 1996 California legislation — [Assembly Bill 1058](#) — recognized the need for greater efficiencies in the child support program. The legislation required that each state superior court create specific courtrooms dedicated to child support cases and provide sufficient commissioners to hear these cases.

Today, the videoconferencing equipment provides a “window” on the court. Child support legal staff and case managers can view and interact with the proceeding in the courtroom without leaving their offices. They can immediately clarify any case details that are in question, accurately capture legal determinations, and remotely print the newly produced court orders for the parties before they leave the courthouse. This process improvement also allows staff to quickly enter the order into the child support computer system and set up financial accounts, as well as receive, process, and distribute initial payments more quickly to better serve customers. The staff takes this extra effort to establish a positive experience for all parties, which also sets the foundation for what will likely be a long-term relationship between the parents and the program.

Building a strong, effective relationship with our court partner requires earnest commitment from each organization's executive-level decision makers. With this shared commitment, each organization takes a positive step towards meeting its mandate of serving the public with the highest quality of customer service that is family focused and outcome oriented.



Getting ready for a new baby?

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September 3
1-2 PM ET
#Prep4Moms
www.PHE.gov/Prep4Moms

Predictive analytics and performance in the public sector

Erica Sabo Gaynor, Workflow Implementation Manager, MA. Dept. of Revenue, Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Division

Many organizations decided to incorporate data analytics into their daily business because it promises substantial increases in productivity, exciting new insights, and an ability to predict seemingly random behavior. The impact and level of success of data analytics in the human services industry is less clear though, particularly around performance measures.

After three years of using and assessing the impact of data analytics, the staff at the Massachusetts Department of Revenue's CSE division has seen improvements but has had moments of uncertainty as well. Ultimately, we have learned that it is neither a magic wand nor a crystal ball, but an ongoing initiative that has provided incremental improvements in program performance. The analytics have also given us a broader understanding of the strengths and limitations of our agency's data.

Background and scope

CSE has five regional offices, a Customer Service Bureau, and a central office that houses the offices of the Commissioner, the Chief Legal Counsel, Policy and Procedures, Finance, and others. We employ about 635 people, manage 230,000 open child support cases, and we collected \$657 million in child support last year.

In 2012, CSE collaborated with Revenue Solutions Inc. to prioritize our casework, improve performance on federal measures, and prepare for a future data-driven system. To do this, we developed a predictive modeling program that included a collections model and a risk-based scoring system. The program would periodically assign a payment performance risk score to noncustodial parents, prioritize the parents by potential yield, and then provide recommended actions. We believed the actions would generate payments, bolster compliance, and route cases for closure.

Implementation

Since 2013, 10 CSE caseworkers have managed their caseloads using this predictive modeling approach. We call them our decision analytics (DA) population. By rolling this initiative out to a small group, CSE established a controlled comparison between the DA and non-DA populations so we could see the impact more reliably. This approach has also provided CSE the flexibility to incrementally modify the program to optimize results.

Findings

Predicting who pays: Statisticians analyzed about 300 behavioral variables and found 20 attributes that have significant predictive power with respect to payment performance. Some of the attributes were intuitive, such as amount of child support owed or the amount of time since the last payment. Others factors surprised us, such as the age of the noncustodial parents' vehicle registrations, their state of residence, and the value of their automobiles.

Researchers found that these 20 data points were the strongest predictors of a noncustodial parent's likelihood of paying child support

- Age of Vehicle Registration
- MSRP of Vehicle
- Number of Final License Suspension Letters
- Ever had a Driver's License
- Number of Occupational Licenses
- Number of Active Employment Records
- Currently in Jail
- Location Status
- Past Location Activity
- Length of Time in Arrears
- Principal Amount Owed
- Current Support Amount
- Number of Cases from Dept. of Transitional Assistance
- Number of TANF Cases
- Number of Modification Judgments
- Enforcement Action that Generated Contact/Payment
- Time Since Most Recent Non-Enforcement Payment
- Ever Made Voluntary Payment After Enforcement Action
- State/Country of Residence
- Age of NCP

Changing relationships: the program often recommended using forms of contact outside of the general contact letters. For example, they have six different letters they can use, depending on the situation in the case. We also encourage them to engage in more proactive casework in an effort to boost compliance. These techniques gave us unexpected results. CSE has seen a shift in the dialogue between staff and customers. While some caseworkers were initially reluctant to contact noncustodial parents who did not appear to have issues that needed to be addressed, staff found these outbound calls resulted in more pleasant conversations than the incoming calls they were

accustomed to receiving. Many customers appreciated this so much that they have maintained better communication with CSE.

The Lift: This term refers to a calculation used to measure the impact of analytics. It compares the rate of collections among the caseworkers using decision analytics to the rate of the staff who did not. The resulting figure represents CSE's potential net gain if we use decision analytics across the non-DA caseload.

During the first year of implementation, we scored approximately 11,000 noncustodial parents, assigned them to a DA caseworker, and tracked their voluntary payment performance. After 12 months, CSE saw a 5 percent increase in the rate of collections based upon the performance of those noncustodial parents. Had the program been rolled out to the non-DA population, CSE projects an additional \$15 million in collections.

CSE is expanding the program to include more staff. Program leaders actively seek input from caseworkers and make improvements to strengthen the program's impact. As CSE makes these changes, we continue to learn more about our customers, the predictability of their payment compliance, and the impact of our actions. CSE will use this knowledge as we continually improve our use of data analytics and incorporate those successes into future agency-wide systems.

Institutions of higher education invited to join Pell pilot program

Reprinted from The Council of State Governments Justice Center

The U.S. Department of Education is inviting institutions of higher education (IHEs) to join a new pilot initiative that makes Federal Pell Grant funding available for incarcerated individuals pursuing postsecondary education and training. Pursuant to the Higher Education Act, this population traditionally has not been eligible to receive financial aid from the Grant Program.

Eligible students are those who, with the exception to their incarceration, would otherwise qualify for the grant, and are eligible for release, particularly within the next five years. Selected educational institutions will partner with one or more federal or state correctional facilities to offer academic programs. Institutions will also provide academic and career guidance, as well as transition services to their students.

To be considered, IHEs must submit a letter of interest to the U.S. Department of Education no later than Oct. 2.

State studies: Get more from the National Directory of New Hires data

Sam O’Hair, Billie Hubbs, and Jen Francis, OCSE

The National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) is a national database of wage and employment information containing new hire, quarterly wage, and unemployment insurance data. The primary purpose of the NDNH is to help state child support agencies locate parents and enforce child support orders.

Since 2001, OCSE has conducted 32 studies in 27 states to estimate how much of each state’s child support collections are a result of NDNH data. Using information from our previous studies, we project that the total amount of money collected nationally in FY 2014 from NDNH data will be \$703 million.

To estimate our success at generating collections, we work with two states each fiscal year to conduct studies at their child support agencies. In accordance with [A Guidebook for a Common Methodology for Determining NDNH-Attributable Child Support Collections](#), we:

- Draw a random sample of 1,000 matches from NDNH-to-Federal Case Registry proactive matches. The sample only includes matches that originated from states and jurisdictions outside of the state under review.
- Analyze cases associated with the matched noncustodial parent to determine whether:

- The state sent an income withholding order (IWO) to the employer based on the NDNH data, or
- Collections occurred because of the IWO and if so, the amount and continuity of the collections.

After we review the matches, we compile the data and conduct a thorough analysis. Then, we generate a report to share our findings with the state. The report contains valuable feedback that helps the state improve its use of NDNH data. The table below shows statistics from five recent studies.

We also analyze factors that may impact the results. For example, we examine how timeliness affects the success in issuing IWOs and generating collections. Additionally, we collect information such as the noncustodial parent’s state of residence to determine whether it impacts the state’s ability to generate IWOs and collections from NDNH information. For out-of-state noncustodial parents, we examine whether incoming collections are the result of outgoing interstate requests or the use of a state’s “long-arm” capabilities.

We encourage you to participate in a study. Through state studies, we:

- Quantify collection benefits from proactive NDNH matches,
- Analyze cases where IWOs were not issued, and
- Identify system issues that prevent states from using NDNH data to update case information.

If your state is interested in participating in a study or wants to learn more about NDNH data, please contact Dennis Putze at dennis.putze@acf.hhs.gov.

State (FY Studied)	Hit Rate (% of sample resulting in a collection)	New Hire-NCP Universe	Median Monthly Collection	State’s Projected Collections in millions (for the year studied)
State AA (2013)	32.5%	164,390	\$321	\$96.5
State Y (2012)	26.0%	25,633	\$254	\$10.2
State W (2012)	19.3%	63,485	\$300	\$19.2
State U (2011)	29.2%	22,072	\$264	\$9.7
State K (2010)	20.3%	6,058	\$222	\$1.8



OCSE will publish the [first evaluation report](#) of the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) on Tuesday, Sept. 1. It will document CSPED’s planning year and first year of implementation, and offers insights into recruitment, engagement, and collaborative partnerships. The report will also provide service delivery strategies for organizations planning or implementing employment programs for noncustodial parents who are unable to pay their child support.

Delaware child support employs individuals with autism

Janice Taylor, Community Relations Officer,
Delaware Health and Human Services Office

One in every 68 children in the U.S. has some form of autism and Delaware Governor Jack Markell does not believe their condition should hold them back. In 2012, when Markell was the chair of the National Governors Association, he “focused on creating better employment opportunities for people with disabilities,” according to an April Delaware News journal article. He “also signed the Employment First Act to help people with disabilities work side-by-side with other employees.”

“People are defined by their ability, not their disability,” stated Gov. Markell. “And many individuals with autism have the time, talent, and desire to make meaningful contributions. Anyone with the ability to work deserves the chance to experience the self-fulfillment, confidence, and gratification that comes from a good job.”

Ernie Dianastasis is the managing director of Computer Aid Inc. (CAI), a global information technology, consulting, outsourcing, and system integration company. He credits the governor and Department of Health & Social Services Secretary Rita Landgraf with bringing CAI and Delaware-based Specialisterne together in 2012 to train and hire people who have autism.

“Employing people with autism and other disabilities is simply a win-win situation, and transforms the lives of citizens who want nothing more than to use their skills to contribute to society.”

Markell, Dianastasis, and Thorkil Sonne, the founder of Specialisterne said recently, “Individuals with autism excel in roles that require a high level of concentration, perseverance in repetitive actions, pattern recognition, attention to detail and process optimization. The roles often result in a high burnout rate among other employees.”

Secretary Landgraf said, “The partnership is about the power of opportunities for individuals with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders. And the people of Delaware benefit from greater inclusion in our society.”

Currently, CAI has four autistic employees subcontracted to the Division of Child Support Enforcement. They review files, separate the contents of the file by case number, and purge unneeded items. They also scan, index, and shred items after the retention time has elapsed.

Autism Delaware Executive Director Teresa Avery said, “People with autism are wonderful employees; they find a job they love and are good at. They can be wonderful at any of a number of things.” She said that what she likes most is that, as time passes, people forget that the participant has a disability. The employee just becomes another member of the team.

Markell summed up the partnership best. “Employing people with autism and other disabilities is simply a win-win situation, and transforms the lives of citizens who want nothing more than to use their skills to contribute to society.”

For more information, call the Delaware Division of Child Support Enforcement Customer Service desk at (307) 577-7171, or visit its online sites, www.dhss.delaware.gov/dcse and www.facebook.com/DelawareDCSE.



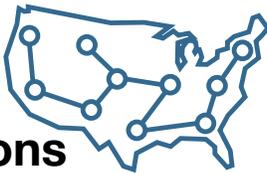
Theodore Mermigos, DCSE Director, (standing on left) with members of the CAI team.

Working On Interstate Child Support Cases

States must use standardized, approved forms when working on interstate child support cases, but some of the current forms are about 15 years old. In 2014, OCSE formed working groups to revise some old forms and draft new ones as needed. OCSE posted a notice in the Federal Register in July requesting comments to the proposed revisions and new forms. People can review the proposed forms and change summary documents in [DCL-15-12](#). The 60-day comment period opened August 4.

For more, contact Debbie Ward at debbie.ward@acf.hhs.gov.

Tribal-state system trends, challenges, and recommendations



Tami Masuca, OCSE

A good strategic plan needs input from many sources to serve the organization and its customers well. OCSE asked many experts to serve on planning committees to help draft a new five-year child support plan. Several state and tribal child support directors participated as part of the Tribal-State Partnerships Strategic Alignment Network group. Although the network discussed numerous topics, many of the conversations and resulting recommendations were about automated systems. In particular, they identified some trends and challenges about IT system access and the importance of understanding each other's capabilities.

As the number of tribal child support programs continues to grow, so does our need for successful partnerships and coordination between states and tribes. These partnerships are critical in intergovernmental cases. Each organization brings different perspectives, ideas, processes, and approaches to the partnership, which may make coordinating and working together challenging. Although diverse, state and tribal child support programs share a common purpose. They encourage moms and dads to be responsible parents — even when they live in separate households — so that children receive financial, emotional, and medical support from both.

The network identified the following trends regarding tribal-state partnerships and their automated systems, or lack thereof:

- The number of tribal child support programs continues to grow.
- States and tribes need to improve automation where appropriate and feasible.
- Child support professionals must have a basic understanding of each other's business processes and system capabilities.

Based on those trends, network participants identified some probable challenges:

- Misunderstandings can arise when tribal and state child support professionals lack knowledge of the other system's capabilities.
- Obtaining and transmitting case information efficiently is hindered because some tribes do not have access to two major data exchange networks, the Child Support Enforcement Network (CSENet) and [Query Interstate Cases for Kids](#) (QUICK).
- Identifying Native American parents on cases can be difficult or impossible because many state systems lack the necessary data elements to identify tribal participants.

- Processing case referrals and transfers within tribal child support agencies depends on their program's level of automation.
- Enhancing automated systems often depends on the availability of federal funds.

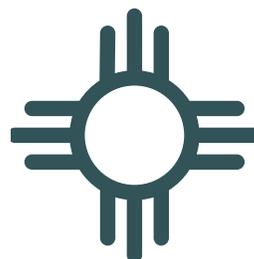
Since federal funding is limited, the members of the network feel the best course of action right now is for tribes and states to work together. They must discuss their system capabilities and explore the options they have available to them to solve challenges that arise or develop temporary workarounds.

The diversity of tribal and state child support programs made it impossible for network members to identify the "ideal" tribal-state partnership regarding system capabilities. Instead, they recommend that the partners review the following strategies to see which ones would work best for each unique partnership.

- States — provide tribal programs with access to the state's child support intranet.
- States — give tribal child support programs access (either read-only or full) to their state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and child support systems depending on the tribe's needs.
- Tribes — secure their systems to IRS compliance standards to demonstrate their system's security and confidentiality.
- Both — work together to access each other's automated systems at an agreed upon level.
- Both — use encrypted emails to ensure secure communications between each other's programs.
- State and tribal directors — meet regularly to keep the lines of communication open.

One important overall recommendation the network made is for agencies to discuss existing policies and protocols. If new ones are necessary, they can work together, including the roles and responsibilities of each agency, and define what their scope and delivery of services will be to each other.

If states and tribes identify and implement these types of tools, strategies, and protocols, it will help them maintain a consistent level of services between agencies.



60+
**Tribal
Programs**

Using behavioral interventions to improve child support programs

Jessica Lohmann, OCSE

Parents do not always follow through or make the choices we would like them to in their child support cases. Sometimes small changes in the way offices send out information or run their programs can make all the difference. These types of changes are often called behavioral interventions. Child support programs are well suited for implementing behavioral interventions because they are data savvy, performance driven, and constantly looking for ways to improve and innovate. Many have made major improvements by using initiatives such as business process reengineering.

Child support offices in seven states and the District of Columbia are participating in the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services (BICS) demonstration project. By using theories and interventions based on behavioral science and psychology while using randomized-control trials, the grantees are able to better understand the users' perspectives. The project also helps them identify psychological bottlenecks in their programs that impede participants' abilities to follow through.

The Washington State Division of Child Support is managing the BICS evaluation by providing guidance and oversight to the Technical Assistance and Evaluation (TAE) team comprised of [MDRC](#), [MEF Associates](#), and the [Center for Policy Research](#).

The BICS grantees have been very busy since we first introduced them in the [November/December Child Support Report](#). During this planning year, they have been working with the TAE team to define and diagnose their first behavioral interventions.

Below are descriptions of the define and diagnose processes that the BICS grantees are currently going through. Once complete, the grantees will move on to designing and testing their interventions to find out what works.

Define

When the grantees were deciding on where to target a behavioral intervention, it was important to define the problems they needed to address and discuss their desired outcomes. The outcome they would ultimately choose needed to be one they could measure relatively quickly with available administrative data. Behavioral interventions can be applied to many different settings, so they prioritized areas. For example: reducing the rate of orders established by default, increasing show-up

rates for paternity establishment meetings and hearings, improving modification processes, and improving staff-client relationships. Ultimately, their desired outcome is to increase consistent child support payments.

Behavioral interventions can improve programs by removing hassle factors and by helping individuals follow through on their intentions. However, behavioral interventions will not solve larger, systemic issues. For example, a behavioral intervention can help make the act of paying child support easier by simplifying the process or making payment options more convenient, but it cannot help a noncustodial parent who is unable to pay due to a lack of resources. In this scenario, there are more complex issues — such as employment barriers — that would require interventions that do not rely solely on behavior.

Diagnose

Most BICS grantee staffs have chosen their target area and are beginning the diagnostic phase. They have been working closely with the TAE team to accomplish tasks such as mapping out all the steps that the customers and the staff need to take to achieve the desired outcome. This process includes talking with people from both groups to get various perspectives on how these processes work.

After the grantees have mapped out the processes, they will use data to identify bottlenecks that can signal where individuals drop out or disengage with the process. This could include someone neglecting to respond to a mailed letter or failing to show up for an appointment. Finally, they will identify behavioral and psychological factors that may explain this drop-off. These factors will be the area of focus for the intervention and will drive the design.

Next steps

Grantees will work with the TAE team to design interventions using insights from behavioral economics and psychology. Then they will pilot these interventions for three to six months and rigorously test them to measure the impact.

Stay tuned to learn more about how to apply behavioral insights in your work!

For general information about the BICS grants, read [Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services](#) in the November/December 2014 CSR. For specific information, contact Jessica Lohmann at Jessica.Lohmann@acf.hhs.gov.



BICS grantees at 2014 kickoff meeting.

Update on Ohio behavioral interventions study



Helping people change their behavior, even if it can change their lives for the better, is a very tough challenge, but one that may be getting easier. OCSE, the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE), and social policy research organization [MDRC](#) have been conducting [Behavioral Interventions to Advance Self-Sufficiency \(BIAS\)](#) studies in several states and localities across the U.S. We hope that minor, cost effective modifications can help noncustodial parents navigate the child support system more effectively.

OPRE wrote about its first BIAS study in an August 2013 CSR article, [Behavioral Economics Meets Child Support](#). Researchers wanted to see if small modifications to current processes could help the Texas Office of the Attorney General increase the number of child support order modification requests it received from incarcerated noncustodial parents. By using minor procedural changes that cost less than \$2 per person to implement, Texas increased requests by more than 10 percent. Read more in the May 2015 article, [Modifying Child Support Orders for Incarcerated Parents](#).

More recently, MDRC worked with an Ohio county in a second study. Readers received their first information about this study in a February 2014 article called [Behavioral Project Tests Monthly Notice to Noncustodial Parents in Franklin County, Ohio](#). In July, OPRE reported that sending low cost reminders to parents produced an almost 3 percent increase in the number of parents who made at least one child support payment over four months. The full story is in the ACF Family Room Blog, [Using Behavioral Economics to Increase Child Support Payments](#). Researchers will release findings from Cuyahoga County, OH, later this year.

The BIAS study has one more year to go, but there is more behavioral economics research on the horizon. Last fall, OCSE awarded grant funding to seven state child support offices and the District of Columbia to further explore the application of behavioral science and psychologies to child support processes. OPRE will also launch the BIAS Next Generation Project this fall. The studies will build off the BIAS research.

Safeguarding personally identifiable information



Danny Markley, OCSE

Child support workers can access many types of sensitive and personally identifiable information (PII). Safeguarding child support information is becoming increasingly more challenging in today's cyber world. Advances in technology, communications, and exchange methods can result in more compromises to child support information.

Hackers get the most news coverage, but “insiders” cause most security incidents. Although these breaches are not intentional, the consequences can have a lasting effect on the integrity and reputation of your agency. These are some common violations state agencies report:

- Case files containing PII left unattended in offices, on workstations, and in courtrooms.
- Faxes and mailings containing PII sent to the wrong parties.
- Unencrypted PII e-mailed to other state agencies or clients.
- Case files and laptops containing PII stolen from employees' automobiles.

We can protect the client PII entrusted to us when we follow these simple tips:

- Place case files in locked containers when you are away from your work area, especially at the end of your business day.
- Verify fax numbers and contact the recipient before transmitting documents.
- Review documents before mailing them to ensure other client information is not included.
- Place PII or other sensitive case information in encrypted e-mail attachments.
- Destroy documents using a crosscut shredder.
- Account for all case files, laptops, and other items when staff leave court.
- Avoid removing hard copies of client information from your agency unless it is clearly necessary.
- Secure laptops and case files in your car trunk instead of leaving them out in plain sight if you have to leave them in an unattended vehicle for a short period.
- Ensure that client information and PII are only stored on laptops with full disk encryption.
- Confirm laptops and computers are scanned regularly for viruses, spyware, and other threats.
- Lock computers and laptops when you leave the area and log off completely at the end of the day.

We must protect child support information and prevent unauthorized access and potential data breaches.

Contact Danny Markley at danny.markley@acf.hhs.gov if you have questions or need help to properly safeguard child support information.

Fort Belknap celebrates Fatherhood Day



Fort Belknap Child Support team

For National Fatherhood Day on June 19, the Fort Belknap Child Support Program hosted a Fatherhood Outreach event to stress the importance of healthy relationships between fathers and their

children. The celebration gave over 125 adults and children the opportunity to spend quality time together in a drug and alcohol-free environment.

The families participated in many activities including a fun run and walk, a carnival, fishing, and face painting. The staff even provided traditional Native American games and a teepee raising. The families could leisurely play together or attendees could sit back and watch children enjoy the day with their fathers.

The Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish and Game Department and the Center for Disease Control set up information booths. The Roads and Fire Department brought in equipment for the kids to explore and a local restaurant provided a healthy lunch for all attendees.

The day was a huge success even though bad weather forced the event to close down early. The community enjoyed it and the Fort Belknap child support staff thought it was a great teamwork activity. Several of them said the smiles on the children's faces were worth the work they put in to the event. Everyone looks forward to next year.



Some of the Ft. Belknap children who participated in the Fatherhood Outreach event.

Gloria DeHart: International child support visionary



Anne Miller, OCSE

The Administration for Children and Families celebrates the life of Gloria DeHart who passed away on June 28 at age 88. Bob Keith, the HHS Chief Counsel for Children and Families, recalls, "I first encountered Gloria in 1978 when I was just starting in child support and Gloria gave me information on wage

withholding in California, a new enforcement mechanism that had been enacted in only a few states." Many others in the child support community knew her from her years as vice-president for international reciprocity for the [National Child Support Enforcement Association](#) (NCSEA) and her innovative work in international child support enforcement.

Early years

Actually, from her earliest days, Gloria was a pioneer. She graduated from Radcliffe College at Harvard University in 1949. She was one of only three women majoring in architecture; however, no architecture firm would hire her because she was a woman. She eventually decided to become a lawyer. She graduated from Boalt Hall School of Law, the University of California – Berkeley, in 1965 and was among the first women to be hired as a deputy attorney general in California. She spent years in the criminal division but she also devoted her personal time and skills to her lifelong love – child advocacy.

For decades, Gloria worked on issues related to international child abduction. She served as a member of the U.S. delegation in the negotiation of the 1996 Hague Convention on Measures for the Protection of Children, and promoted its implementation. She remained a resource to other attorneys and international specialists on international child abduction issues. Her law review articles were cited in U.S. Supreme Court briefs as recently as 2013.

Early international work

Gloria was also a visionary in the field of international child support enforcement. The U.S. did not join two key child support conventions in the 1950s and 1970s so a number of U.S. states began their own negotiations of nonbinding reciprocal arrangements with foreign countries. Because the U.S. had no central authority to coordinate the development of these cooperative arrangements, each state acted on its own. Gloria had a much bigger vision. At that time, she was a leader within NCSEA, as well as an active member of the American Bar Association (ABA) Family

Law Section and chair of its International Law Committee. Marilyn Ray Smith, former director of the Massachusetts child support agency, described how Gloria pulled together NCSEA colleagues and ABA members to standardize and collaborate on international support negotiations. “Off they went, paying their own way, using their vacation time, writing ahead to make appointments with their contacts in the foreign governments. State Department officials . . . and . . . the Bureau of Consular Affairs paved their way by writing letters of introduction and enlisting support on the ground from the U.S. consuls in the cities visited.” Gloria and her colleagues negotiated reciprocal arrangements on behalf of their own states and then encouraged other states to sign on to these declarations. Smith said Gloria visited over 30 countries during this 30-year period.

State Department and PRWORA

In 1993, Gloria joined the Department of State as an attorney advisor and continued to build relationships with international colleagues, urging the importance of cooperation in international support enforcement. This role became increasingly important as a result of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). Congress recognized the need for federal leadership in the area of bi-lateral negotiations, so it authorized the secretaries of State and Health and Human Services to declare any foreign country to be a reciprocating country if it met certain specified support enforcement requirements. These requirements were based on the standards Gloria used in negotiating reciprocal arrangements years earlier. After PRWORA, Gloria led the initial efforts to negotiate these bi-lateral agreements. Thanks to her early work, the U.S. now has 26 agreements with foreign reciprocating countries.

The 2007 Hague Convention

Later, Gloria represented the International Bar Association during negotiations of the 2007 Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance. Many of her core principles in negotiating reciprocal child support arrangements — cost-free services to custodial parents, the establishment of a support order when a foreign order cannot be recognized — are critical provisions within the Hague Convention. During the years of treaty negotiations, her legal interventions were precise, her diplomacy excellent, and her physical stamina amazing.

It is unlikely we would have a network of international Central Authorities on child support without the life work of Gloria DeHart.

More details are available in [Gloria's obituary](#).

Finding income information

Elaine Sorensen, OCSE

Have you thought of looking at ZIP-code level data to better understand a noncustodial parent's ability to pay? What if you are trying to set a child support order and the noncustodial parent has not submitted any financial information? Why not look at his or her ZIP code and check out the characteristics of that location? Here are some links to ZIP-code level data.

Statistics of income (SOI) tax stats — [Individual income tax statistics](#) — ZIP code data

This site has Adjusted Gross Income information by ZIP code. Calculate the average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) in the noncustodial parent's ZIP code by dividing the Total AGI for that ZIP code by the Number of Returns in that ZIP code. Compare this average AGI to the statewide average. Does the noncustodial parent live in a ZIP code where the average AGI is less or more than the statewide average?

American Fact Finder

This site has poverty rates by ZIP code. Go to the main webpage of [American Fact Finder](#), enter the ZIP code you are interested in, and then click Go. A table appears with total population and popular tables. On the left, there is a column of topics. Select Poverty. A table appears with the poverty rate for that ZIP code. Compare the results of this ZIP code to statewide results. Is the poverty rate in this ZIP code lower or higher than the statewide average?

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