

Child Support Report

Vol. 38 No. 7 August 2016

COMMISSIONER'S VOICE


VOICE | BLOG

Employers

Our ability to collect consistent child support depends upon employment — and employers. The Family Support Act of 1988 revolutionized the collection of child support by requiring employers to withhold support payments from the paychecks of parents owing support. The law flipped the paradigm: instead of garnishing delinquent payments, the law established a process modeled after income tax withholding to withhold payments as they became due. In fact, the income withholding law is an early application of behavioral economics by setting up automatic payroll deductions with an opt-out to help parents do the right thing.

Next came the [Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act](#) of 1996 (PRWORA), enacted twenty years ago. PRWORA required employers to report new hires and established the National Directory of New Hires. Obtaining employer data on a systematic basis allowed us to determine whether parents owing support have a regular paycheck coming in.

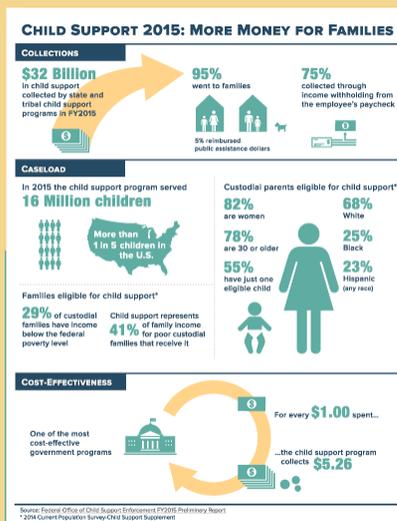
These two business practices — income withholding and new hire reporting — transformed our program. Today, 75 percent of collections are paid through income withholding, and our current collection rate is at an all-time high of 65 percent. This means that families are more likely than ever to receive regular on-time payments that they can depend upon and budget for. And it means that we could not be where we are today without our essential partnerships with employers. Indeed, employers are our MVPs. In recent years, several child support agencies have launched employer outreach campaigns and established dedicated employer liaisons to keep our employer partnerships robust.

As part of our efforts to facilitate income withholding and new hire reporting, OCSE has prioritized automated tools, portal enhancements, and standardized procedures to streamline the process. These streamlined processes make it easier for employers to help us carry out our mission and get more support to families.

continued

More money for families in 2015

The child support program collected \$32 billion for children in fiscal year 2015. Our infographic, [Child Support 2015: More Money for Families](#), shows the latest statistics on our collections, caseload, and cost effectiveness.



Inside this issue

- 1 Commissioner's Voice — Employers
- 3 Employer outreach builds allegiance
- 4 Processing electronic payments in a flash
- 4 Helping employers fulfill child support obligations
- 5 Financial capability building
- 5 Designing behavioral interventions to improve programs
- 6 Improving early engagement — First interventions launched
- 7 Partnering with employment services
- 8 Performance and incentives: Past, present, and future
- 10 Proposed funding to replace aging systems
- 10 Starting school with medical coverage

On August 30, 2016, President Obama signed the first global child support treaty ratified by the U.S.

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We have made a number of improvements such as:

- e-IWO — Federal legislation enacted in 2014 requires states to use electronic income withholding. More than 50 states and territories participate in e-IWO, and they issue withholding orders to more than 9,000 unique Federal Employer Identification Numbers. Find out more in Sherri Grigsby's 'Employer outreach builds allegiance' article on page 3.
- Reporting lump sum payments — Employers can now report lump sum payments through the federal portal to increase child support collections and help employers comply with state laws.
- e-Term — Employers can report employee terminations electronically through our portal.
- Verification of employment — Following a change in federal legislation, we issued guidance ([DCL-16-01](#)) to employers and to state child support agencies that a verification of employment sought by a child support agency does not trigger the reporting obligations of the Fair Credit Reporting Act.
- New hire reporting pilot — This tested new approaches to improve new hire reporting rates among employers.

Employers do something else for child support collections, too. They provide jobs. Most of the parents in our caseload are working and raising families. The most effective way to improve our collection rate is to

increase the number of parents who are employed and paying monthly support through income withholding. A growing number of employers are providing job opportunities for parents with a criminal record and have signed the White House Employer Fair Chance Business Pledge, a commitment to consider job applicants with a record. We have a link to the pledge on the [OCSE Employers](#) webpage.

OCSE launched the [Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration](#) (CSPED) in 2012. A number of other research projects have studied interventions designed to improve the employment outcomes of low-income adults. Our colleagues at the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families are publishing a series of briefs as part of their [Employment Strategies for Low-Income Adults Evidence Review](#) (ESER), a systematic review of studies published between 1990 and mid-2014 regarding employment and training interventions for low-income adults.

In this issue, our spotlight is on employers. Keep reading to learn more about the important connection between fatherhood and jobs, why the federal office is reaching out to employers, and how Illinois is helping employers get more money to families. We would like to hear about your successes in working with employers.

Vicki Turetsky

President Obama on fatherhood and jobs

When men don't have work, when they don't feel good about being able to support their families, then often they detach themselves. ... So, part of the challenge here is to say to young men, 'Take responsibility for your children.' But part of it is also, let's make sure we've got an economy in which they feel as if they're attached to the workplace, and bringing home a paycheck.

— President Obama, in [Parade Magazine](#), June 20, 2014

On the first anniversary of the My Brother's Keeper initiative, President Barack Obama greets Gerard Contee during a mentee lunch in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the White House, Feb. 27, 2015. (Official White House Photo by Pete Souza)



Employer outreach builds allegiance

Sherri Grigsby, OCSE

The child support program recognizes that the partnership with the employer community is key to ensuring families receive regular, consistent payments. In fact, in fiscal years (FY) 2014 and 2015, 75 percent of all child support collected nationwide was from employers implementing income withholding orders and sending payments to state disbursement units. Nearly all child support agencies have employer-focused outreach, and many have units dedicated to employer-related activities. OCSE also has a team dedicated to working with child support agencies and employers to improve communication, practices, and processes.

One of our most successful collaborations is the electronic income withholding order (e-IWO) program. Getting payments to families quickly and cost-effectively are major benefits of e-IWO. Families receive payments about three weeks sooner when employers receive orders electronically instead of waiting for paper copies to arrive through the regular mail. We highlight these benefits through a robust outreach campaign to promote e-IWO to employers.

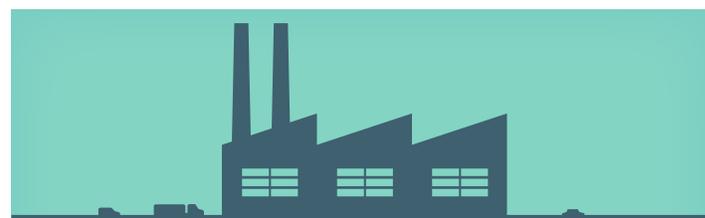
Currently, more than 1,200 companies and organizations with 9,900 unique Federal Employer Identification Numbers use OCSE's e-IWO process.

Currently, more than 1,200 companies and organizations with 9,900 unique Federal Employer Identification Numbers use OCSE's e-IWO process. Since FY 2005, we can attribute over \$400 million in collections to child support agencies and employers using e-IWO. This proves that e-IWO is the way to go!

Another electronic process that employers can use is the Employer Services application on OCSE's Child Support Portal. It allows them to notify nearly all child support agencies about upcoming lump sum payments to employees who owe child support. Employers can also provide information about employee terminations. We will debut an application enhancement this fall that will allow employers to share new or updated contact and address information with child support agencies. This will improve communication and ensure that documents reach families at the right address the first time so they will receive payments quickly.

While many employer-related activities revolve around withholding and remitting child support payments, we also look for ways to build the capacity of low-income parents to pay support. For example, we are promoting the [Fair Chance Business Pledge](#) that asks employers to “eliminate unnecessary hiring barriers for individuals with criminal records.” Too often, individuals with criminal records have a difficult time finding employment, even though they have already paid their debt to society. Many parents with child support orders have a criminal record, so taking action to improve their employment opportunities helps them support their children.

For more information about these outreach activities, contact the Employer Services team at employerservices@acf.hhs.gov.



Employer Services Can Answer Your Questions

The Division of Federal Systems has a [new animated motion graphic](#) - the first in a series that will answer some of the most common questions received by the Employer Services Team, such as:

- If my employee works in one state and we receive a withholding order from another state, which state's laws apply?*
- Where do I send payments?*
- Is there a maximum amount that may be withheld from an employee's paycheck?*
- What if my employee's paycheck is smaller than the amount of child support ordered withheld?*
- Who do I ask for guidance? The state child support office or the federal office?*

Processing electronic payments in a flash

Robyn Large, OCSE

Child support agencies have pushed the benefits of electronically processing child support payments, and a record number of employers have listened. Annually, states provide statistics about payments they received electronically from employers, agencies, and individuals. In 2004, they processed 33 percent of their remittances through electronic funds transfers (EFT). In 2015, that figure nearly doubled to almost 65 percent.

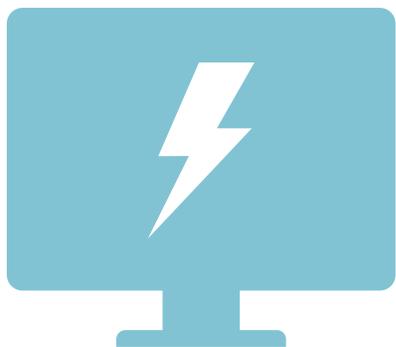
The EFT increase is largely due to the efforts of child support agencies and OCSE's employer services team. Both groups have been stepping up their email outreach to employers and making presentations at conferences. At the 2016 American Payroll Association conference — attended by more than 2,000 payroll professionals — there were two sessions about child support and both featured information about e-payments.

The [16 states](#) that have passed legislation or regulations requiring employers to remit their child support payments electronically have reported a higher percentage of collections through EFT.

Remitting child support payments electronically saves time and money, increases accuracy, and delivers child support to families faster. Increasing the number of electronic child support payments helps the child support community streamline collections.

For more information about converting to electronic payments for child support, [contact your state child support agency](#) or visit the [OCSE Electronic Payments](#) webpage.

Remitting child support payments electronically saves time and money, increases accuracy, and delivers child support to families faster.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Helping employers fulfill child support obligations

Dennis Erickson, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Central Operations and John C. Harris, Manager, *Illinois Division of Child Support Services*, and Maurice Franklin, Senior Project Manager, *MAXIMUS*

For employers, staying informed about compliance regulations related to their employees is challenging primarily because there are so many. Among the legal mandates they have to consider are child support requirements, which are central to the support of children and families statewide.

“Employers are the key to an effective child support enforcement system.”

Illinois is helping employers become more acquainted with their role in managing child support obligations, which includes compliance with new hire reporting, income withholding orders and national medical support notices. These tasks are at the core of a recently implemented Illinois outreach initiative called Child Support Compliance 101. It is a joint venture of state and private sector team members who focus on new businesses. Their goal is to educate employers early on about the role they have in the child support process.

“Employers are the key to an effective child support enforcement system,” said Pam Lowry, Administrator for the Illinois Division of Child Support Services. “By contacting employers when they first set up shop in Illinois, we hope to educate them, and help them become and stay compliant in the child support arena.”

Since the initiative began in early February 2016, team members have placed more than 2,000 calls and have received an overwhelmingly positive response. Many employers have expressed interest in learning more about managing child support obligations, often asking specific questions and requesting regular updates on Illinois child support matters.

Since an outreach call may be the first connection employers have with the child support program, officials want to promote a positive working relationship between the state of Illinois and employers. When employers and states work together, there is potential to increase compliance, which, in turn, benefits children and families.

For more information about the Illinois Child Support Compliance 101 initiative, contact Maurice Franklin, senior project manager, MAXIMUS, at Maurice.Franklin@illinois.gov.

GRANTS

Financial capability building

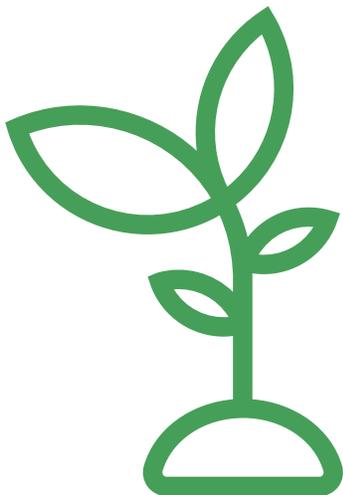
James Murray, OCSE

Financial capability is the combination of financial knowledge, skills, and access to financial services needed to build and manage financial resources effectively. With the Building Assets for Fathers and Families (BAFF) three-year demonstration grants, OCSE, in collaboration with the Administration for Children and Families Office of Community Services (OCS), had two main goals. We wanted to help low-income noncustodial parents build assets and improve financial literacy skills, and study the effectiveness of this approach in achieving more consistent and timely child support payments.

During the grant period, child support agencies partnered with OCS [Assets for Independence](#) grantees whose focus is on moving low-income families out of poverty. The grantees provided training on topics such as managing bank accounts, repairing bad credit, accessing refundable tax credits, and building assets through savings. They also offered financial counseling and answered questions about child support obligations.

The success of these BAFF grants shows that local partnerships with financial education providers can help child support programs engage low-income parents needing support services and assistance with child support issues. More details will be available soon in the upcoming first Financial Capability fact sheet about the BAFF grant.

OCSE encourages child support agencies to consider ways to improve financial capability for parents. The [About Assets for Independence](#) webpage has more information.



Designing behavioral interventions to improve programs

Jessica Lohmann, formerly of OCSE

In 2015, OCSE launched the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services (BICS) demonstration grant project in seven states and the District of Columbia. While the BICS project has many goals, it has two primary focus areas. First, introduce a way of doing business that takes behavioral factors and regular evaluation into account to improve success. Next, encourage child support offices to incorporate behaviorally informed approaches into their culture.

With help from a technical assistance and evaluation (TAE) team, all eight BICS grantees will go through a behavioral diagnosis and design process to identify behavioral bottlenecks — key moments in a process where people disengage or fail to follow through to reach the outcome that would be in their best interest. Once the grantees identify the bottlenecks, they will design, pilot, and evaluate an intervention to address these issues. The process consists of four phases: define, diagnose, design, and test. While each one has its own core objectives and activities, the stages may overlap and are not always linear.

During the first year of the project, the grantees worked closely with the TAE team and OCSE to define and diagnose their first behavioral interventions. For information on those phases, read [Using Behavioral Interventions to Improve Child Support Programs](#) in the August 2015 Child Support Report.

This year, the grantees are working with the TAE team to design and test interventions using insights from behavioral economics and psychology.

Design

All of the BICS grantees have chosen their target areas and diagnosed where they can use behavioral interventions to alleviate bottlenecks and engage parents. Collectively, they plan to make improvements in one of these target areas: service of process, order establishment, or modification applications. Grantees are now designing interventions to address the bottlenecks identified in the diagnosis phase.

As part of the design phase, many grantees are using behavioral science theories to redesign forms, train staff, and write scripts for caseworkers to use when communicating with a customer. Examples include using identity theory to have staff call customers ‘parents’ instead of calling them ‘obligors’ and reducing hassle factors by providing them with simplified checklists and instructions to help them follow through with next steps.

continued

As the grantees are designing their communications strategies, they are paying special attention to the use of procedural justice concepts. This is the key to help parents feel that child support offices are treating them fairly and objectively.

Test

Once the grantees design their interventions, they will work with the TAE team to test their impacts using random assignment or rigorous quasi-experimental evaluation designs. It is essential to test these interventions during the pilot phase to understand whether the behavioral theories have a positive impact.

Based on the target areas, the TAE team tracks different outcomes to analyze intervention impacts such as the number of parents who show up to establishment meetings, how many complete modification applications, or the number who make consistent child support payments. The tests will run from three to nine months depending on the intervention, sample size, and outcome measures. Several grantees have launched their interventions. The rest will launch and start testing soon.

Next Steps

After the evaluators and grantees analyze their first test results and determine the level of impact, sites will work with OCSE and the TAE team to refine their approaches and improve upon their interventions. We expect that grantees will use test results to refine processes, tweak their intervention designs, and make repeated tests. If results are positive and no design changes are necessary, sites may institutionalize the intervention and begin defining and diagnosing another bottleneck.

For more information, contact Lissan Anfune at Lissan.Anfune@acf.hhs.gov.



The BICS Technical Assistance and Evaluation Team

To manage the evaluations, OCSE awarded the Evaluation of the Behavioral Interventions for Child Support Services grant to Washington State's Division of Child Support. Staff provides guidance and oversight to the technical assistance and evaluation team comprised of [MDRC](#), [MEF Associates](#), and the [Center for Policy Research](#).

Improving early engagement — First interventions launched

Lissan Anfune, OCSE

Vermont and Texas were the first states to launch their interventions.

Vermont

This intervention centers on resolution meetings — newly structured pre-court discussions held in the child support office. The meetings give both parents a chance to negotiate critical issues such as parentage and order amount. As part of this effort, the BICS team has designed several pre-meeting communications.

In addition to the pre-meetings, the child support staff also follows up with the parents to make sure they understand the child support process. The team designed the outreach efforts and meeting structure to reduce the hassle and complex nature of the order establishment and negotiation process and to provide a transparent and fair process for each parent. Ultimately, they believe the meetings will lead both parents to engage in the child support process early so child support payments will increase.

Texas

This grantee wants to improve initial payment outcomes among employed parents who have new support orders. When the court first establishes an order, it can take up to eight weeks for an income withholding order (IWO) to take effect. During those early months, the state requires that parents make their initial payments manually. Unfortunately, many parents fail to do so for several reasons — they do not know when their employer will begin withholding electronically, are unaware of the consequences of waiting for the IWO to take effect, or find the manual payment process too complex.

During the first test of the Texas Start Smart initiative, child support officers are meeting with eligible parents to provide clear guidance about the need for initial payments and to outline the payment methods available to them. Parents also receive prompts and reminders to help them follow through on the commitments they agreed to during the meeting. The grantee designed the process using behavioral concepts that focused on limiting the hassle of selecting a payment method, encouraging immediate action, and developing a more positive relationship with the child support office.



JOB OPPORTUNITIES

COORDINATION POINTS

Partnering with employment services

Lauren Antelo, *formerly of OCSE*

“You’re having trouble paying your child support? You want to provide for your children, but you’re struggling to find work? Well, maybe I can help you.”

Today, you are likely to hear these words within the walls of child support agencies across the country because parental employment and child support are two sides of the same coin. Children rely on steady financial and emotional support from both of their parents throughout childhood. Many child support professionals know this and are already steering under- and unemployed parents in the right direction.

As of February 2014, more than 30 states and jurisdictions operated [work programs for parents in their caseload](#). Approaches vary in size and structure, but few are statewide — usually due to a lack of funding. For operating capital, some states and jurisdictions have competed for Administration for Children and Families grant funding through the Office of Child Support Enforcement or the Office of Family Assistance. Others have made strategic partnerships with state and local agencies serving under- and unemployed parents.

Find job service programs

Think about how to make employment referrals or how you can use such services by analyzing your community’s resources. Locate agencies or organizations already providing job search and job placement services. Are they community-based organizations, or perhaps a Department of Labor funded [CareerOneStop Center](#)? Do the TANF or [SNAP Employment and Training](#) programs operate work programs in your area?

Once you have identified potential agencies, figure out how to build partnerships. What does the child support agency bring to the table? You probably have more to offer than your potential partners realize.

Develop a plan

Child support agencies are in a unique position to support strategic partnerships with programs serving low-income or hard-to-employ parents. In fact, there are quite a few activities an agency can start doing right now with current child support funding. Here are examples of some actions you can take:

- Identify barriers parents face in paying child support;
- Develop a payment plan to help parents become compliant with their child support obligations;
- Follow up on and track parents’ compliance; and
- Facilitate parent peer groups to accomplish child support outcomes — as long as each session addresses child support issues.

Additionally, child support agencies can support partners who provide employment services by:

- Providing referrals and coordinating activities with workforce agencies or organizations;
- Maximizing parents’ access to the services these agencies provide; and
- Meeting regularly with partners who have programs that can help parents pay child support.

Provide an encouraging environment

Consider making some small physical changes within the child support office that will encourage parents to find employment. Something as simple as posting job opportunities in your lobby can have a real impact on the way parents feel when they walk into your office. You can take it a step further and place computers in the waiting area for parents to use to job search. Computers are also helpful for parents who want to check on child support case information or connect to your state’s online job board.

Communicate more effectively

Next, capture what your agency can offer in a short pamphlet or one-page handout and share it with potential partners. Outline the services your agency provides that encourage work. Highlight the incentives you offer to parents to get them involved in job search activities such as child support order modifications or debt compromise programs.

Many agencies have mandates to prioritize their service for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult program. Unfortunately, they may not have thought to reach out to the child support program to serve parents with pressing needs.

Consider staffing adjustments

Finally, some states have created specialized units that focus on under- and unemployed parents who are willing to pay child support. These staffs provide parents with the case management outlined above and serve as a point of contact for the referral agencies. Developing trusting relationships with parents and partners can make all the difference.

Stable child support collections depend on the economic stability of the noncustodial parent. Institutionalizing any one of the above activities can help more parents achieve that goal.

Next month, Gretchen Tressler, of OCSE, will tell you how you can help job-seeking parents both on- and offline.

ANALYSIS

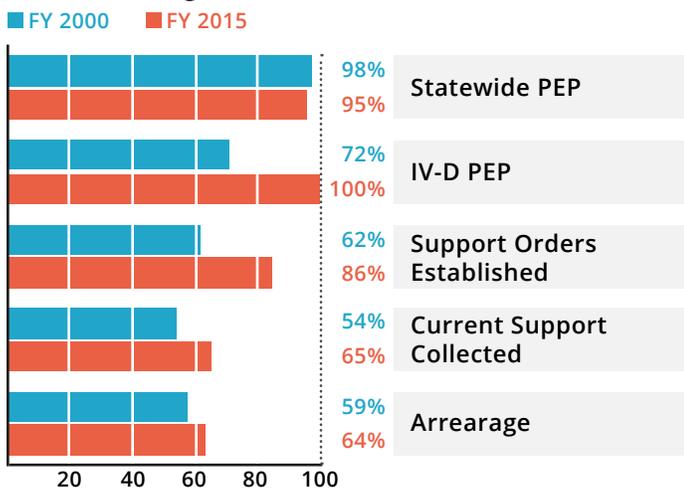
Performance and incentives: Past, present, and future

Tom Killmurray, OCSE

This is part two of a two-part series on performance measures. Last month, Angela Ingram-Jones [reviewed the history of incentives](#). This month, we will look at the history of performance, discuss each incentive measure, and examine implications for the future.

In last month's newsletter, Angela Ingram-Jones outlined how the federal office calculated incentive payments before the enactment of the [Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998](#) (CSPIA). This month, we will look at how the child support program has progressed since then, what progress we have made, and where we might go in the future.

Comparison of FY 2000 and 2015 Performance Measures National Average



The chart above provides you a snapshot of national and state incentive measures in 2000 and in 2015 (according to Federal Fiscal Year 2015 data). The results demonstrate improvements in national and state performance for five measures.

Federal, state, and local partners created these measures. Congress agreed by writing them into law with CSPIA in 1998 and child support started a phased implemented in 1999. For details on the incentive measures and the complex incentive funding calculation, see the appendix of the [FY 2015 Preliminary Report](#).



Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP)

For cases with unmarried partners, the first thing the caseworker has to do is legally establish parentage. Birth rates for children born to unmarried parents vary widely among states, so states can choose between two reporting options. The “IV-D PEP” measures the state’s efforts in establishing paternities in the IV-D caseload. The “Statewide PEP” measures paternity establishment efforts across the state.

Because there are two measures, we cannot make one statement about performance in this area.

- In FY 2000, 7 of 25 states were at 90 percent or above on the IV-D PEP.
- In FY 2015, 25 of 26 states were at 90 percent or above.
- In FY 2000, 17 of 29 states were at 90 percent or above on the Statewide PEP.
- In FY 2015, 27 of 28 states were at 90 percent or above.

No matter how paternity establishment is measured, this is clearly one of the most successful areas of the program.

Order Establishment

This is the next step in unmarried cases and the first step in cases involving married parents. There is no legal obligation to pay child support until a court or administrative body issues an order. While this is a measure of process, it is absolutely essential to working all cases and collecting support. Cases are not “enforcement-ready” until a support order has been put into place. We have seen consistent and steady growth in this measure over the 15-year period. The national average increased from 62 percent in FY 2000 to 86 percent in FY 2015. In FY 2000, only six states were above 80 percent on this measure. In FY 2015, 47 states were performing above 80 percent, and no states performed below 69 percent. The range of state performance in FY 2000 went from 26 percent to 93 percent. In FY 2015 state performance ranged from 69 percent to 95 percent.

Current Collections

Regular, on-time support payments are critical for families because it keeps many of them self-sufficient and meets the ongoing needs of children. We saw significant growth in the current collections rate in the early 2000s, but it plateaued after FY 2007. After declining in 2009, we started seeing increases again in 2010 and have seen steady increases since then. In FY 2015, the current collections rate was 65 percent.

continued

In FY 2000, no states performed at, or above, 80 percent. In FY 2015, one state was performing above 80 percent and eight states had rates above 70 percent; no states were below 50 percent. The range of state performance in FY 2000 was between 35 and 77 percent. In FY 2015, state performance ranged from 52 to 84 percent.

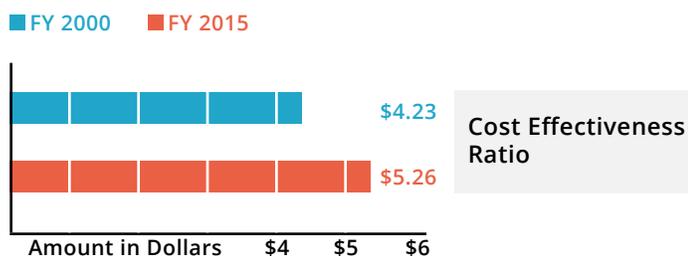
Arrearage Collections

This is the number of IV-D cases paying toward arrears divided by the number of IV-D cases with arrears due. Performance here has been relatively flat.

The national average in the early years was 60 percent. It increased significantly in fiscal years 2008 and 2009 to 63 percent. OCSE attributes this two-year rise primarily to one-time federal intercepts of payments from the Economic Stimulus Program and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In 2010, the national average dropped to 62 percent, and remained there for four years before returning to 63 percent in 2014 and increasing another notch to 64 percent in 2015.

In FY 2000, two states performed at or above 80 percent, and two states were below 40 percent. In FY 2015, one state was performing above 80 percent, and three were below the 50 percent performance level. The range of state performance in FY 2000 went from 33 to 83 percent. In FY 2015, state performance ranged from 44 to 84 percent.

Comparison of FY 2000 and 2015 Cost Effectiveness Ratio National Average



Cost Effectiveness

This is a basic measure used for many government programs and continues to be valuable to child support because we collect money (see last month's article for historical details). Growth here has been fairly consistent since we included it in the revised incentive system in FY 2000. The national average increased from \$4.23 in FY 2000 to \$5.26 in FY 2015. This increase in the cost-effectiveness ratio is attributable both to increased collections and decreased spending primarily attributable to federal and state funding cuts. In FY 2000, nine states performed above \$5.00 on this measure, and only two states had performance below \$2.00. In FY 2015, 31 states were performing above \$5.00, and three states were

below the \$2.00 performance level. The range of state performance in FY 2000 went from \$1.31 to \$7.69. In FY 2015, state performance ranged from \$1.14 to \$12.26.

What the future holds

Clearly, the child support program has come far under the existing incentive system. Just as federal and state partners worked together to propose the performance incentive system that became CSPIA, OCSE will continue to collaborate with its partners to examine performance, discuss and debate changes, and develop recommendations to improve the program.

Based on recent discussions among partners, there is no current consensus on major legislative reform proposals, only technical improvements. One recommendation to Congress contained in the President's Budget is an improvement to the PEP measure, which currently allows for a PEP full incentive payment at 80 percent or above, but triggers penalties below 90 percent. The President's Budget would reverse these thresholds, allowing a PEP full incentive payment at 90 percent and triggering penalties below 80 percent. OCSE remains committed to an incentive system that rewards states for achieving outcomes that benefit children and families — whatever shape that may take in the future.

For information on performance measures and incentives, contact Angela Ingram-Jones at angela.ingramjones@acf.hhs.gov.



TECH FOCUS

Proposed funding to replace aging systems

Raghavan Varadachari, OCSE

Recent data collected by the Division of State and Tribal Systems (DSTS) shows that most state child support systems are nearing the end of their useful lives. About 60-65 percent of the state systems were built 15-20 years ago. The Model Tribal System, as well, has been around for almost a decade.

The majority of the state child support systems are legacy mainframe configurations. They are difficult to maintain due to staff turnover — many mainframe staff have retired and some developers have moved on to more modern technologies. More important, these systems are old, making maintainability difficult and modernization impossible. By shifting Information Technology (IT) control from the child support program office to state-level IT offices, management also becomes more complex.

Maximizing technology

In the FY 2017 budget request, the Administration proposed funding to maximize reusable technology. This will create savings and cost efficiencies for the states, tribes, and the federal government and provide better service delivery to child support customers. Once this technology fund is in place, OCSE will be able to build the Model Automated Child Support System (MACSS), including caseworker and financial modules, core components of every child support system.

A typical child support system costs between \$80 million and \$120 million to set up. After that, an agency often spends approximately 25 percent of the purchase price each year just to maintain the systems.

The OCSE-built system will include some basic interfaces. Its structure and architectural framework will allow states to add their own interfaces and modules more cheaply and easily. States will be able to share their configurations with other states or tribes.

Next steps

The MACSS is still in the planning stage, but interested states can collaborate with DSTS now. States can go ahead and look into the possibility of hosting their applications on the cloud using Fedramp-certified cloud providers. It may simplify implementation and drastically reduce the cost of setting up an infrastructure to host a system. MACSS development is contingent on future funding from Congress proposed in the President's Budget. Look for program updates in the future.

For information about MACSS development, contact David Jibodu at david.jibodu@acf.hhs.gov.

COORDINATION POINTS

Starting school with medical coverage

Child support orders must have accompanying medical support orders, but many low-income parents struggle to afford the insurance costs. [InsureKidsNow](#) has a toolkit that child support offices can use to help schools inform parents about medical insurance. Schools and school systems are natural partners to reach and enroll eligible students in [Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program](#) (CHIP). Cultivating these relationships takes time and follow-through, so the summer is a perfect time for child support offices to prepare for the Back-to-School season.

Schools provide important in-roads to families and are trusted sources for information about a variety of services. That is why the Connecting Kids to Coverage National Campaign developed a guide, the School-Based Outreach and Enrollment Toolkit, to encourage broad collaboration with schools in an effort to enroll eligible children in these important programs. The Toolkit highlights strategies for integrating enrollment into existing school processes like including enrollment questions on new student registration forms and developing a sustainable outreach partnership. It also includes ready-to-use tools like message guides, templates, an outreach calendar, and resource links.

You will find more information in the [toolkits and other Back-to-School resources](#).

Child Support Report

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