

The National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)

What are the CSPED Grants?

To further the national child support program's mission and goals, OCSE operates a number of competitive grant programs that provide federal funds for research and demonstration programs and special projects of regional and national significance for operating state child support programs. In fiscal year 2012, OCSE used its grantmaking authority under Section 1115 of the Social Security Act to establish the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED).

Through a competitive grant application process, eight state child support programs were selected to participate in the five-year demonstration from October 2012 to September 2017. The eight states are: California, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. The first year was a planning year. In October 2013, sites began enrollment and random assignment, which runs through September 2016. During the final year, grantees will continue to serve noncustodial parents as the demonstration winds down. Each grantee will receive \$775,000 in 1115 demonstration funds over five years. Once Federal Financial Participation (FFP) is added, the total amount of funding available to each grantee over five years is \$2.3 million.

OCSE launched the National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) to test the efficacy of child support-led employment strategies. The goal is to increase reliable child support payments among noncustodial parents who are unable to pay child support. This fact sheet is the first in the CSPED series and introduces the demonstration.

Why are employment programs led by child support relevant?

The goal of the child support program is that every child can rely on steady financial and emotional support from both of their parents throughout childhood as they grow into adults. Stable child support collections depend on the economic stability of the noncustodial parent. In fact, in FY 2013, 74 percent of all child support collections were received through wage withholding by employers. So while the child support program works well for those parents who have steady incomes from regular employment or other means, it has been less effective for the 20 to 30 percent of noncustodial parents with limited earnings. For example, 70 percent of unpaid child support debt is owed by parents with no or low reported earnings.¹

Noncustodial fathers care about their children and want to provide for them. However, noncustodial fathers with little or no connection to the formal labor market cannot pay consistent support, increasing the likelihood that they and their children are poor. These parents face multiple employment barriers. Criminal records are common among this population, further reducing their employment prospects. Nearly 90 percent have a high school education or less, and 40 percent do not work at all in a given year.² Many also have health problems, substance abuse issues, unstable housing arrangements, and limited access to private transportation, all of which make it difficult to get and keep a job.

The child support program is uniquely positioned to effectively manage the delivery of employment services and assure results for children. Prior research shows that child support-led employment programs are more likely to yield results for noncustodial parents and their children.³ The child support program serves 80 percent of poor custodial families and has a strong stake in seeing that poor noncustodial parents are able to support their children.⁴ Managing employment programs allows the child support program to ensure that noncustodial parents receive the services they need to find work. Once they find a job, wage withholding ensures that child support goes to custodial families.

The CSPED Model

To be eligible for CSPED, noncustodial parents have to be in the child support program with a current support order and not making regular payments because they are under- or unemployed. As noted previously, the demonstration is child support-led. Specifically, this means the child support program sets the expectations and manages the program. It is the fiscal and lead agency in each site. It does not mean that child support programs provide the employment and fatherhood/parenting services. The child support program provides the child support piece and then it partners



Manuel, a 39-year-old father of five, was laid off from his job of 16 years in May 2013. Shortly after, he was mugged. Thieves stole the \$1,000 in his wallet from his last paycheck he had just cashed. More devastating to Manuel, they took his Social Security card and permanent residence card. He didn't have funds to pay rent or replace the stolen identification, and no employer would hire him without them.

“Participating in CO-PEP changed my life for the better”

A Colorado project, Jefferson County CO-PEP, stepped in to help. CO-PEP staff contacted the landlord and worked out a payment arrangement and helped Manuel navigate the complicated immigration system to get a new passport and Social Security card.

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with employment and fatherhood/parenting programs to provide those services.

CSPED is comprised of four core services:

- **Case Management** - Case managers provide entry to program services and assure program and participant accountability.
- **Enhanced Child Support Services** – The locations operating CSPED in each state temporarily suspend discretionary enforcement tools, such as revoking drivers' licenses, and expedite review and adjustment, if appropriate, of child support orders. States are also encouraged to reduce state-owed child support debt in return for successful program outcomes.
- **Employment-Oriented Services** – The grantees provide job search assistance, job readiness training, job development and placement, and job retention services. Some also provide short-term skills training, on-the-job training, and courses toward a high school diploma.
- **Fatherhood/Parenting Activities using Peer Support** – The grantees provide fatherhood/parenting classes from an OCSE-approved curriculum using a peer support format.

The grantees partner with a domestic violence expert in their community who is available for training and consultation throughout the demonstration. They operate under a domestic violence plan developed during the planning year and reviewed by the domestic violence expert.

Each grantee has an incentive package that is used to encourage successful program outcomes among participants. Specific incentives vary among the sites, but typically include gift cards, bus passes, and tickets for child-oriented outings. Most sites also provide limited work supports, such as transportation assistance, uniforms, emergency set asides, and assistance with child care.

Within days, Manuel landed a job offer in a nursing home kitchen. He made his first full child support payment after struggling for nine months to make ends meet.

Manuel said, “Participating in CO-PEP changed my life for the better by helping me work with Immigration, rental assistance, transportation, and my resume. [Before] I felt down, no energy, depressed, and overwhelmed. I didn’t know where to start or what to do. My CO-PEP case manager provided me information about computers and the library which has really helped. She is still helping me get better and better. CO-PEP is helping me get back on my feet and provide for the needs of my children.”

Who Delivers CSPED Services?

The eight state child support programs in the CSPED demonstration selected 18 local areas within their states to implement CSPED. Each local area has a site manager who is a child support worker at the local office. The child support programs partner with local agencies to deliver CSPED services, allowing the partners to do what they do best.

How is CSPED being evaluated?

CSPED is being evaluated using random assignment, the most rigorous evaluation method available. OCSE awarded a grant to the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) to evaluate CSPED. DCF, in turn, partnered with the University of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty and Mathematica Policy Research to conduct the evaluation.

References

1. Sorensen, Elaine, Liliana Sousa, and Simon Schaner. (2007) *Assessing Child Support Arrears in Nine Large States and the Nation*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
2. Sorensen, Elaine and Helen Oliver. (2002) *Policy Reforms are Needed to Increase Child Support From Poor Fathers*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
3. Doolittle, Fred, Virginia Knox, Cynthia Miller, and Sharon Rowser. (1998) *Building Opportunities, Enforcing Obligations: Implementation and Interim Impacts of Parents' Fair Share*. New York: MDRC.
4. Lippold, Kye and Elaine Sorensen. (2013) *Characteristics of Families Served by the Child Support (IV-D) Program: 2010 Census Survey Results*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.



California - Pathways to Self-Sufficiency (PASS)

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Stanislaus County	Alliance Worknet	Center for Human Services	Haven Women's Center of Stanislaus County

Colorado - Colorado Parent Employment Project (CO-PEP)

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Arapahoe County	Workforce Center	Arapahoe County Fatherhood Coordinator and Aurora Mental Health	Gateway, and Colorado Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Program (state level)
Boulder County*	Workforce	Steven Gimple, Licensed Family Therapist	Safehouse Progressive Alliance for Nonviolence, Safe Shelter of St. Vrain Valley, and Colorado Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Program (state level)
El Paso County	Goodwill Industries	Responsible Fatherhood	TESSA, CASA, and Colorado Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Program (state level)
Jefferson County	Workforce Center and Goodwill Industries	David Rossett	Whitian House, Family Tree, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Jefferson Center for Mental Health, Crisis Hotline, and Colorado Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Program (state level)
Prowers County	Workforce Center	Prowers County Department of Human Services	Domestic Safety Resource Center, Partnership for Progress, 11th Judicial District's Family Court Facilitator, and Colorado Department of Human Services Domestic Violence Program (state level)

* Boulder County exited the program in February 2015 due to staffing changes.

Iowa - Reliable Employment and Child Support Help (REACH)

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Des Moines Regional Area	Evelyn K. Davis Center for Working Families	Visiting Nurse Services of Iowa and Dad's With A Purpose	Iowa Coalition for Domestic Violence

Ohio - Right Path for Fathers Partnership

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Stark County	Goodwill Industries and Stark County Community Action Agency	Early Childhood Resource Center	Domestic Violence Project

South Carolina - Operation: Work

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Charleston County	South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families: Father to Father	South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families: Father to Father	South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Greenville County	South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families: Upstate Fatherhood Coalition	South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families: Upstate Fatherhood Coalition	
Horry County	South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families: A Father's Place	South Carolina Center for Fathers and Families: A Father's Place	

Tennessee - Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED)

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Davidson County	Department of Labor and Goodwill Industries	Faith in Action	Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Hamilton County		First Things First	
Shelby County	Department of Labor and WIN Career Strategies	Families Matter	

Texas - NCP Choices PEER

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Bell County	Texas Workforce Commission	Texas Workforce Commission	Texas Council on Family Violence
Webb County			

Wisconsin - Supporting Parents Supporting Kids (SPSK)

Location of Lead Agency	Employment Provider	Fatherhood/Parenting Provider	Domestic Violence Expert
Brown County	Forward Service Corporation	Family Services	End Domestic Abuse WI - Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Kenosha County	Goodwill Industries	Goodwill Industries	