

Child Support Report

Vol. 37 No. 2 February 2015



COMMISSIONER'S VOICE


VOICE | BLOG

My child support story

The [November-December 2014 Child Support Report](#) gave you an overview of how new legislation, the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act (P.L. 113-183), affects the child support program. One particular provision requires us to draft a Report to Congress to recommend cost-effective program improvements, address effectiveness and performance, and outline the future of the child support program.

Please tell me your story. Whether you are a mom or a dad, or whether you grew up living apart from a parent, I want to hear from you. We will draw from these real-life experiences for our Report to Congress.

My story is that I left home early. I was 17 and pregnant when I got married and 27 when I divorced. I finished high school, but dropped out of community college. I had two kids and a desire to give them a better life.

I worked two or three part-time jobs sometimes, relied on child support sometimes, borrowed money from friends sometimes, received public assistance when child support didn't come in, and juggled the bills every month to make ends meet. I was fired from a job once when my kids came down with chickenpox, and I had no one else to care for them. The employer did not offer sick leave. I had no health coverage, so I had to come up with the money to pay the doctor. Once the kids recovered, I started working as a waitress. That turned out to be a good move because I made a little more money in that job.

I had an interstate child support case in the days before interstate enforcement was common. Even when child support did not come in, I tried to minimize anger and to help my kids stay connected to their dad because I saw that they loved him and were unhappy when they saw conflict between us.

Families are complicated, and times can be hard. My story has given me an appreciation both for parents who desperately need child support and parents who struggle to pay it. As [commissioner](#), I want to make the program work the best way it can for real families with real needs and limited means. Our goal is to make sure kids can depend upon the financial and emotional support they need from their parents.

You have stories, too — whether you are a mom, a dad, or a grown up child. What does child support mean to you? What was it like growing up in your family? What is the most important lesson you can share about raising kids when the parents don't live together?

All comments will remain anonymous. Please do not include information of a confidential nature, such as sensitive personal information or proprietary information, other than your state. Information obtained as a result of this effort may be used by the federal government for Report to Congress development. Please be aware that your comments may be posted online or cited in the report. You can help us keep it real.

Vicki Turetsky

Inside this issue

- 1 My child support story
- 2 Child support grant success stories
- 4 Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month
- 5 Veteran homelessness — community support system
- 7 Joint effort to help homeless veterans
- 8 Yurok Tribe signs memo with California
- 9 Electronic income withholding 10 years later

#GOTCOVERED
ABOUT
11.4
MILLION
ARE SIGNED UP FOR
2015 HEALTH CARE COVERAGE

HealthCare.gov

That includes millions of children who now have health care with the ACA. [Find out more here.](#)

Read about working with incarcerated parents in a special March-April issue of the Child Support Report.

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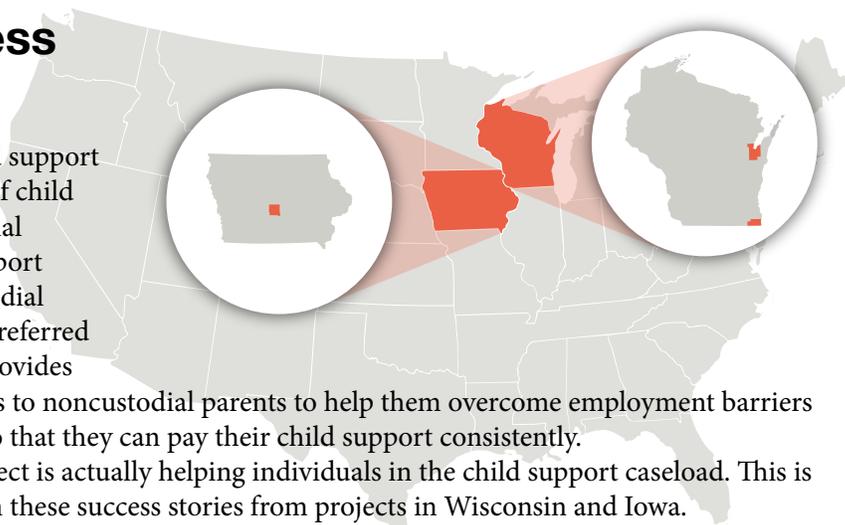


Child support grant success stories

In 2012, OCSE awarded a five-year grant to child support agencies in eight states to test the effectiveness of child support-led employment programs for noncustodial parents who are finding it tough to meet their support obligations. The National Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration is commonly referred to as CSPED (pronounced “See-sped”). CSPED provides

employment, parenting, and child support services to noncustodial parents to help them overcome employment barriers and strengthen relationships with their children so that they can pay their child support consistently.

Sometimes it is hard to see whether a grant project is actually helping individuals in the child support caseload. This is not the case with CSPED as you will discover from these success stories from projects in Wisconsin and Iowa.



Perseverance pays in Brown County, WI

The staff at Supporting Parents Supporting Kids (SPSK) creates an environment “where every customer leaves our doors feeling a greater sense of hope than when they entered them,” says its employment case manager, James Morris. The program gives classes on parenting and employment skills and connects parents with employers, educational institutions, and skilled labor training. Morris says, “By providing both social and financial supports, our customers have real hope through opportunity.” The county recently collected several stories that show how far some of the parents have come with the help of SPSK. Joshua’s story is one of those.

Joshua’s Story: A lesson in perseverance

Joshua held back tears as he recalled his horrifying childhood that included physical and sexual abuses he and his younger brother and sister endured at the hands of his father, his mother’s acquaintances, and other relatives.

When Joshua was 12, he continually reported the abuse to school officials until they eventually acted. Child Protective Services substantiated the abuse and neglect, and immediately placed the three in a foster home in Kellnersville, WI.

Joshua recounts egregious discipline by his foster parents. Over the years, he lived in several other foster and group homes and even tried to commit suicide once. Before his 20th birthday, he had fathered a child and had been sent to prison. After serving his time, the county placed him in a pre-release center to transition back into society.

Joshua was not able to see his son. This was partly because he had no job, but he was also having trouble finding employment because of his minimal job history. In the spring of 2014, the Brown County Child Support Agency sent him an application to the SPSK program. With seemingly little to lose, Joshua accepted and eventually completed the parenting and employment workshops.

“Going through the program gave me hope,” Joshua said. He created his first resume, cover letter, and email account.

He moved in with a friend in May, which he says was a big relief. Despite receiving multiple rejections from prospective employers, Joshua’s resolve grew. In early July, Joshua got a job offer as a machine operator from a local manufacturer. Now that he has a job, he has reintegrated into his son’s life, and has occasional weekend visits.

In late August, Joshua discovered, on a fluke, that the younger brother Joshua hadn’t seen in over 20 years had also graduated from the SPSK program — two months after him. Ironically, Joshua had been trying to locate his brother on social media and through social service agencies but couldn’t get information on his brother’s whereabouts because of the confidential nature of the foster care system. The SPSK staff was able to witness the tearful reunion (pictured below). Some benefits from the program simply cannot be measured.



Thanks means a lot to Kenosha County, WI

Project coordinators and one parent in Kenosha County recently shared the following messages about their SPSK program. These narratives highlight how parents feel about both the program and the staff members who are making a big difference in their lives.

From a program coordinator: Brian Kelley, a self-employed laborer and father of two, was devastated by the recession and suffered from anxiety when he came to the Kenosha County program. Through the program, he regained his confidence by attending parenting and job readiness classes. Brian participated in a job orientation at a local grocery store headquarters in hopes of getting a job. Working with employment services, he managed to obtain only a couple of short-term positions.

Brian's luck finally changed in April 2014, when the chain hired him for a full-time position as a warehouse clerk. In Brian's words, "The [Kenosha County] program gave me avenues and information on how to strengthen my job skills, and the proper way to speak at job interviews. I am very thankful to Becky Cornell and Nina Taylor. Without them, I wouldn't have landed my new career. I hope this program stays in place because it has helped me, and I hope it will also help others achieve their goals."

From a parent participant: I want to take a moment to acknowledge work experience coordinator and job developer Becky Cornell's invaluable assistance to me in my

career navigation. I had been out of the professional office arena for almost five years and had no clue where to begin again. Becky first helped me create a new resume that would help me stand out in a stack of applicants.

Working with Becky has given me the confidence to apply for opportunities that I would not have thought to do before. As a result, I have received more responses from employers and have had some better job offers as well. Becky Cornell has great resources, great insight, and much value to offer in career guidance. This program is outstanding and I don't know what I would do without it. I am very grateful to be working with her.

From a program coordinator: A noncustodial parent volunteered for the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration. During a conversation, the noncustodial parent mentioned that he has not seen his 16-year-old daughter in many years. She wanted nothing to do with him and had ignored his contacts. I encouraged him to not give up, and suggested that he may want to consider sending a card or letter on a consistent basis to his child. I told him that one day she may respond and, at a minimum, she would know that he was available to her.

He came to the office recently and said that he had sent her a card (through a friend of the mother) and that they have been talking every day for two weeks! He showed me a picture of the two of them and they looked so happy together. This shows how beneficial the grants are to the lives of the program participants and their family members.

REACH-ing his potential in Polk County, IA

Brad Schabel, REACH Coordinator, Evelyn K. Davis Center

The Iowa Department of Human Services Child Support Program and the Evelyn K. Davis Center (EKD) run a program called Reliable Employment and Child Support Help, or REACH. The project aims to improve the financial well-being of children by increasing the engagement of noncustodial parents in Polk County through a variety of coordinated service offerings. Staff members provide noncustodial parents with job development, child support assistance, and parenting and financial education training at the center's one-stop shop in Des Moines.

The program hopes to serve 750 noncustodial parents in the grant's four-year timeframe. Since the program started in October 2013, REACH has served more than 200 parents and many have excelled. Here is one success story.

Terry Ault had a difficult life. Joni Hupke, a child support case coordinator at the Iowa Child Support Recovery Unit, said, "At the time of the CSPED survey, Terry shared the enormous burdens he was carrying on his shoulders." He was unemployed, had held several manual labor jobs, and spent

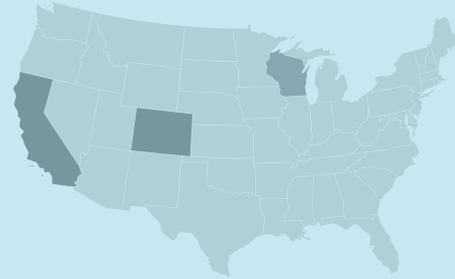


time in prison. With the help of the REACH program and staff at the center, Ault was able to get his commercial drivers license and much more. “They taught me how to better manage difficult parenting situations as a separated couple and my finances once I got a job,” he said. “I was open to their help and that made a big difference.”

Mary Green, Financial Capability Network specialist, was one of the people who worked directly with Ault at the EKD center. She said he was a perfect example of the effectiveness of REACH. “From having no work history or field in mind, to being trained, employed and happy in a job, Terry is on a trajectory that may never have been possible without the REACH program.”

More inspiring CSPED stories

The [August 2014](#) and [September 2014](#) Child Support Reports featured CSPED success stories from California, Colorado, and Wisconsin.



RECOGNITION MONTHS

Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month

John Langrock, *OCSE*

February is [National Teen Dating Violence Awareness](#) month—a time to raise awareness about abuse between young people and the actions they can take to help prevent it. During the month, recognition programs and activities across the nation educated young people about relationships, teach healthy relationship skills, and work toward preventing this troublesome cycle of abuse.

The [LoveisRespect.org](#) website estimates that 72 percent of eighth and ninth graders are dating, which is also about the time violent behavior typically begins (between the ages of 12 and 18) according to the American Bar Association Juvenile Justice Center estimates. The website includes some disturbing statistics associated to teen dating violence.

[LoveisRespect.org](#) notes serious long-term, negative effects resulting from teen dating violence. Victims of abusive or violent relationships during adolescence have a

greater risk for substance abuse, eating disorders, and risky sexual behavior. They often experience further domestic violence. Physically or sexually abused teen girls are six times more likely to become pregnant and twice as likely to get a sexually transmitted disease.

Unfortunately, the incidence of teen dating violence is underreported. Only 33 percent of teens who were in a violent relationship ever told anyone about the abuse. More than 80 percent of parents believe teen dating violence is not an issue or admit they don't know if it's an issue.

This year, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program at the HHS Administration for Children and Families participated in Teen Dating Violence Awareness month by reaching out to young people, advocates, service providers, and community partners to promote healthy communication, relationship building, and peer-support. The [Family and Youth Services Bureau](#) website has a list of online resources and events people can use all year long.

[PreventIPV.org](#) has information on methods to help prevent intimate partner violence and lists peer-reviewed prevention tools and approaches.

An infographic with a dark blue background and a photo of a young woman looking down. It features several statistics in large white and yellow text.

Nearly **1.5 MILLION** high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year.

1 in 3 adolescents in the U.S. is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner

1 in 10 high school students has been purposefully hit, slapped, or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend

1 in 4 high school girls have been victims of physical or sexual abuse

Girls and young women between the ages of **16** and **24** experience the highest rate of intimate partner violence — almost triple the national average.

Additional domestic and teen violence awareness programs for child support professionals

Preventing and Responding to Teen Dating

Violence highlights effective multi-level approaches to teen dating violence that is geared toward parents, educators, health care professionals, and advocates.

The following sections may be the most useful:

Promoting Healthy Relationships, and Community Outreach and Community-based Interventions.

Enhancing Safe Access to Child Support: Partnering with DV Programs discusses resources to assist child support

programs in helping parents safely and confidently obtain child support, including domestic violence resources, tools, and training materials.

The Runaway and Homeless Youth & Relationship Violence Toolkit organizes information, resources, tips and tools drawn from the experiences of collaborative projects, domestic violence programs and runaway and homeless youth agencies.

PROMISING PRACTICES

Veteran homelessness — community support system

Kim Danek, *OCSE*

There were nearly [50,000 homeless veterans](#) on any given night in January 2014 according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. That is more than could fit in either of these [major league baseball stadiums](#), Texas Rangers Ballpark (49,115) or Oriole Park at Camden Yards (48,876). Unfortunately, this is not a new problem.

In 1994, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched [Project CHALENG](#) (Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Educations and Networking Groups) to “bring together homelessness service providers, advocates, Veterans and other concerned citizens to identify the needs of homeless Veterans and work to meet those needs through planning and cooperative action,” according to Program Manager Jessica Blue-Howells. CHALENG has two components, an annual survey and a community partnership development aspect.

Survey

The VA conducts the survey to rate unmet needs of homeless veterans in communities across the country. The VA, along with state and local governments and community partners, use the data to determine what programs, outreach efforts, or partnerships should be developed to help veterans overcome barriers they face when they try to return to society. Listed below are the top 10 unmet needs of male and female homeless veterans according to the [2013 CHALENG Survey](#).

Developing Partnerships

The VA knew early on that a single agency alone could not meet all of these needs so it started building partnerships throughout the country with various civic, non-profit, and government agencies. For example, the VA works with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide veterans with housing vouchers. The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program, commonly called [“HUD-VASH,”](#) has delivered 10,000 vouchers a year since 2008. Unfortunately, vouchers

Top 10 unmet needs for male homeless veterans

- 1 Registered Sex Offender Housing
- 2 Child Care
- 3 Legal Assistance to Prevent Eviction and Foreclosure
- 4 Legal Assistance for Child Support Issues
- 5 Legal Assistance to Help Restore a Driver’s License
- 6 Legal Assistance for Outstanding Warrants and Fines
- 7 Family Reconciliation Assistance
- 8 Financial Guardianship
- 9 Financial Assistance to Prevent Eviction or Foreclosure
- 10 Military discharge upgrade

Top 10 unmet needs for female homeless veterans

- 1 Registered Sex Offender Housing
- 2 Child Care
- 3 Legal Assistance for Child Support Issues
- 4 Legal Assistance to Prevent Eviction and Foreclosure
- 5 Family Reconciliation Assistance
- 6 Credit Counseling
- 7 Legal Assistance to Help Restore a Driver’s License
- 8 Legal Assistance for Outstanding Warrants and Fines
- 9 Dental Care
- 10 Financial Guardianship

alone are seldom enough. There are often accompanying legal or financial problems, sometimes both, that contribute to a veteran's inability to secure permanent housing.

According to an [OCSE fact sheet](#), "... child support debt can hurt a veteran's credit rating and capability to rent or qualify for housing assistance, as well as obtain employment. A child support order that is not appropriate for the veteran's actual income level can make it difficult to pay for housing expenses." Often, these veterans do not have money to hire a lawyer to assist with the myriad legal issues created by child support arrearages.

Veterans Child Support Initiative

In January 2010, the American Bar Association (ABA), OCSE, and VA developed the "[Veterans Child Support Initiative](#)" to identify veterans with child support issues so they could connect them to VA benefits providers, free legal services, and local child support enforcement resources. Members of the collaboration team recruited nine cities for the project pilots — Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, San Diego, Seattle, and the District of Columbia.

Even though each site's set up was unique and provided different services, they all included child support assistance.

Some conducted legal clinics at VA facilities and homeless shelters that addressed child support issues. At one location, veterans participated in the child support agency's fatherhood program. One pilot site worked with the VA's Compensated Work Therapy Program.

In addition to the pilot initiative, many sites held expanded events called Stand Downs. The term Stand Down resonates with many veterans because they associate it with a day when military units suspended duties in favor of holding critical training activities and personnel events. The [VA Homeless Veterans](#) website describes Stand Downs as "collaborative events, coordinated between local VAs, other government agencies, and community agencies serving the homeless." In San Diego, the partners collaborate to hold a child support court in conjunction with its annual Stand Down day.

The overall Veterans Child Support Initiative has been very successful and has unofficially grown beyond the original cities. Child support offices interested in learning how they can help homeless veterans should read two OCSE fact sheets, [Child Support Participation in Stand Down Events](#) and [Ending Homelessness Among Veterans: OCSE, VA, ABA Project](#), and go to the ABA [Veterans Child Support Initiative Summit](#) webpage.

Photos from the summit

The November 2014 Veterans Child Support Initiative Summit began with a group discussion that focused on building effective collaborations. Attendees talked about how to identify partners for a child support initiative targeting homeless and at-risk veterans. People already involved with such initiatives shared promising practices for establishing common goals, maintaining communication, and cross training. The group also identified barriers to effective collaboration and strategies for overcoming those barriers. There were sessions that focused on issues specific

to each partner within the HHS-VA-ABA collaboration.

For example, VA representatives led a session that focused on the most effective ways for VA staff and veteran service providers to identify veterans with child support issues. A panel of lawyers discussed how their nonprofit entities provide legal assistance to homeless and at-risk veterans. They also discussed various legal service delivery models, recruitment of volunteer attorneys for legal clinics, and funding sources. Representatives from OCSE highlighted federal resources addressing veterans and child support issues. [Click here](#) to learn more about the summit.



Joint effort to help homeless veterans

Gwen Anderson, Social Service Sr. Administrator/Volunteer Military Liaison, Delaware Division of Child Support Enforcement

November 2014 was an exciting month for 15 federal, state, and local child support community members because we teamed up with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the American Bar Association (ABA) for a two-day Veterans Child Support Initiative Summit in Washington, DC. We spent much of our time discussing the results of a four-year, nine-city pilot project that the three organizations launched in 2010 in order to provide homeless veterans and veterans at risk for homelessness with child support legal assistance.

I was honored to participate in the summit and I was inspired by others who are passionate about supporting those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom!

During the summit, a VA representative talked about the results of its annual survey of homeless veterans. Since the survey began asking about specific types of legal assistance needs in 2008, homeless veterans have said they desperately needed child support legal assistance to end their homelessness. In the 2013 survey, homeless female veterans ranked child support help as their third highest unmet need and males ranked it as their fourth highest.

Throughout the summit, representatives from the various pilot projects shared stories about the veterans they had helped. One story that stuck in my mind was of a veteran who, to the naked eye, didn't have any special challenges. He was a proud veteran who had a commanding military voice and stature until, shortly before he attended court, he spoke softly and asked if

he could take his dog to court or to the hearing. The representative didn't know the veteran relied on a service dog to cope with his Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Towards the end of the summit, one thing was clear. Homeless veterans and veterans at risk for homelessness are faced with many unique challenges that they cannot tackle on their own. They need everyone, including the child support community, to help them end their cycle of homelessness. As representatives from child support programs, the VA, and the ABA develop strategies for rolling out the pilot efforts to other cities, I encourage the child support community to find opportunities to build strong working relationships with county, local, non-profit veterans organizations, non-ABA legal groups, and even veterans themselves.

For example, I work with two of my child support colleagues, Enoch Coverdale and Selena Johnson, to set up information tables at our state's annual Veterans' Stand Downs. We help homeless veterans who are noncustodial parents connect with child support agencies in other states, even if the veteran does not have a child support case in Delaware. I have also served as a member of Delaware Joining Forces since 2009. [Joining Forces](#) is a state-wide network of public and private organizations that provide services through our military and veteran communities. Finally, I represent our child support office in the Dover Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness in our state's capital.

As a military brat, a proud military spouse, and a 27-year member of the child support community, I was honored to participate in the summit and I was inspired by others who are passionate about supporting those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom!



Pictured from left, Selena Johnson, Gwen Anderson, and Enoch Coverdale

We can all do something to end veteran homelessness. Visit the [VA Homeless Veterans](#) webpage for a list of resources.

Help for Homeless Veterans
877-4AID-VET
va.gov/homeless | (877) 424-3838



State and tribal child support officials after signing the Memorandum of Understanding. Seated are (left to right) Vickie Contreras and Alisha Griffin from California DCSS, Thomas O'Rourke and Abby Abinanti from the Yurok Tribe.

TRIBAL MATTERS

Yurok Tribe signs memo with California

Denise Hurchanik Bareilles, Attorney/Program Manager, Yurok Child Support Services

KLAMATH, CA – The Yurok Tribe of Northern California has become one of the newest tribal governments to open its own child support office. As part of the process, the tribe recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the California Department of Child Support Services (DCSS) to streamline the method of transferring tribal child support cases from the state to the tribe. This is the first agreement between a tribe in the state and DCSS. It sets forth the procedures for the Superior Courts of California and county child support agencies to transfer cases to the Yurok Tribal Court and Yurok Child Support Services.

The transfer process begins with identifying Yurok tribal cases and providing participants with a notice that their case is eligible for transfer. The California Superior Court holds a hearing so case participants may consent or object to the transfer before the court makes its decision.

New customers will see that the tribal child support

office provides services to locate case participants, establish paternity, establish and modify child support orders, and collect and process support payments. It also negotiates noncash alternatives for child support payments, and uses enforcement methods such as wage garnishments through income withholding orders issued by the Yurok Tribal Court.

Through the Yurok Family Centered Services Project, the tribe is reaching families in its caseload that may be struggling or lacking stability. Tribal members can receive financial counseling, help with parenting plans, and even job skills training with tribal enterprise employers. If parents owe arrears to the state, program coordinators will help them apply for California's Compromise of Arrears Program, a debt forgiveness program. The tribe also offers Yurok family language activities. The goal is to provide social and economic supportive services to parents and their children in a way to strengthen family relationships.

Please contact Yurok Child Support Services for additional information at (707) 269-0695; or by email using yurokcss@yuroktribe.nsn.us. An application for services is available [here](#).

To see a list of all tribal child support programs, visit the [OCSE Tribal Agencies](#) website.

Electronic income withholding 10 years later

Sherri Grigsby, Employer Services Manager, OCSE

The first states began using electronic income withholding orders (e-IWO) in FY2005, but by October 2015, every state will have to implement e-IWO.

In October 2014, Congress passed legislation requiring all states to implement electronic orders within the year. Kentucky and Maryland were the first to implement e-IWO since the legislation passed. Now 34 states send income withholding orders electronically to employers. OCSE is working closely with the remaining 20 states and territories so they can benefit from the significant cost savings and increase in collections.

Total dollars associated with e-IWO since inception

Development Cost	Collection Increase	Administrative Savings	Net Increase
\$2,040,000	\$242,128,028	\$3,375,477	\$243,463,505

Cost vs. benefit

In the 34 states, OCSE estimates that their total administrative savings (money saved by not having to copy, print, and mail paper orders) and the increase in their collections has resulted in a net increase of \$243 million since implementing e-IWO (see the table below). These totals include each state's estimated benefits since inception.

Continued growth

In 2014 the e-IWO system processed nearly 1.2 million orders electronically. As more states and employers implement e-IWO, that number will continue to grow saving states time and money.

For more information about e-IWO, contact Bill Stuart, william.stuart@acf.hhs.gov.

Did you know?

The Vaccines for Children Program can provide free vaccinations for eligible children. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) website can help you find out if your child qualifies and how to locate a provider.

Affordable Care Act Deadline

Families who missed the 2015 HealthCare.gov sign up deadline, may still be able to sign up for healthcare coverage through [Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program \(CHIP\)](#).

[Medicaid](#) and [CHIP](#) are state-federal programs that are available to people who meet certain requirements, such as those with limited incomes or disabilities.

People can apply for Medicaid or CHIP coverage any time by applying directly to their state agency or by filling out a Marketplace application. If it looks like a family or child is eligible for either program, the Marketplace will send out information to the state agency, which will contact the parent to finish enrollment. Once that is done, Medicaid or CHIP coverage can begin immediately.

Many states have expanded their Medicaid programs to cover all residents with income below a certain level. Learn [which states are expanding Medicaid](#).

Child Support Report

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