

Child Support Report

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COMMISSIONER'S VOICE


VOICE | BLOG

Talking with the courts

Over the past 18 months, I have had a number of conversations with national and state judicial groups, as well as individual judges, magistrates, and court administrators. These conversations across the country have led me to two clear conclusions: The courts are having many of the same conversations that we are in the child support community and there is judicial support for implementing family-centered child support processes. This summer, I had the honor of addressing the state court chief justices and court administrators about our

family-centered framework at their annual conference, which focused on domestic relations issues. While there, I learned that the Conference of Chief Justices (CCJ), the association representing the chief justices, has adopted access to justice and civil justice reform as key priorities for the coming years.

Since then, the National Center on State Courts (NCSC) has written a groundbreaking report on civil justice reforms strongly endorsed by CCJ in a July 27, 2016, resolution. NCSC publicly released [Call to Action: Achieving Civil Justice for All](#) on August 3. Two short, informative podcasts about the report are also available on the same webpage.

I urge each of you whose work intersects with the judiciary to review the recommendations contained in the report and in Appendix I, [“Problems and Recommendations for High-Volume Dockets.”](#)

Here are some sobering facts outlined in the report. In about 75 percent of civil cases, at least one party is self-represented, “creating an asymmetry in legal expertise,” 45 percent are uncontested, and 20 percent of civil cases end up in default judgments. Inadequate service of process contributes to the high default rate: “traditional procedures for serving notice in civil lawsuits are functionally obsolete, especially in suits against individuals. Typical methods of serving process are riddled with inaccuracies and inadequacies.” Overcrowded and confusing courtroom environments also contribute to uncontested and default judgments. “One size fits all” civil procedure and court rules are not working for litigants and many defendants cannot afford to litigate. The practice of calendaring dockets, requiring parties in several cases to come to court and wait for their cases to be called results in many people missing work, and incurring child care and transportation costs.

continued

After the relationship ends, joint childcare decisions still have to be made. If you have college-age children, you have an earlier financial aid window this year. Many colleges and scholarships require that students file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when they apply for financial aid. The first day of the FAFSA filling window for the 2017-2018 school year has moved to October 1st!

Read more in [College Students and Parents: What You Need to Know About the 2017-2018 FAFSA.](#)



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October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Find information to help your program in the next *Child Support Report*

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The report calls for change:

Restoring public confidence means rethinking how we work in fundamental ways. We need to put citizens back at the center of our system. We must ensure they are heard, respected, and capable of getting a just result, not just in theory, but in everyday practice. We have to harmonize the fairness of our process with the modern, flexible experience people expect. These recommendations empower courts to embrace new procedures and technologies, to give each matter the resources it needs — no more, no less — and to prudently shepherd the cases we face now. ... The Recommendations are crafted to work across local legal cultures and overcome the significant financial and operational roadblocks to change. With concerted action, we can realize the promise of justice for all. Our citizens deserve it. Our democracy depends on it.

The report places a renewed focus on high-volume calendars, emphasizing the requirement for all judgments to comply with basic procedural requirements for notice, timeliness, and sufficient documentation. It states that resolution of uncontested cases must meet the same standards for due process and proof as contested cases. It calls for simplified court rules and processes that screen out unnecessary technical complexities.

The report lays out a set of specific recommendations that call on state courts to:

- Conduct a thorough examination of their civil case business practices that adapt to case needs to reduce delay, cost and complexity and increase fairness;
- Implement “right-sized” case management and case “pathways” based on a sufficient assessment of individual case characteristics and needs; and
- Ensure that litigants have access to accurate and understandable information in plain language as well as real-time help to navigate the process.

Sometimes I hear child support administrators express trepidation about reaching out to state court leadership. But child support agencies are not alone in grappling with high-volume caseloads, severely reduced resources, the dramatic increase in pro se litigants, the critical need for technology and research-informed case management tools, a Constitutional imperative to provide equal access to justice and procedural fairness for all, and a strong commitment to positive child and family outcomes. I say that there has never been a better time to begin a dialogue with our judicial partners at every level of state court administration. Take the initiative.

Vicki Turetsky

SPOTLIGHT — INCARCERATION

Justice-involved women — increasing numbers

Jonathan Stanley, OCSE

The incarceration rate of mothers has more than doubled in 25 years making women the fastest growing population entering the criminal justice system. A Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, [Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children](#), stated that the number of children with an incarcerated mother increased more than 130 percent between 1991 and 2007.

According to a report, [Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform](#) by the [Vera Institute of Justice](#) and [The Safety and Justice Challenge](#), the number of women in local jails in the United States is now almost 14 times what it was in the 1970s, a far higher growth rate than for men. “Once a rarity, women are now held in jails in nearly every county — a stark contrast to 1970, when almost three-quarters of counties held not a single woman in jail,” the report said.

Today, women make up nearly 20 percent of the total criminal justice population, according to the National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women, and a larger proportion of mothers than fathers were custodial parents at the time of their arrest. In 2000, the [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) found that, in the month before arrest or just prior to their incarceration, 64 percent of mothers lived with their children compared to 44 percent of fathers. This has dynamic consequences that reverberate far beyond the incarcerated parent. To understand the impact, we have to consider the effects of the parent’s arrest and separation from the child, the impact on the family, and the ways child support can help or hinder post-incarceration outcomes.

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Effects on children

Researchers have found that parental incarceration is traumatic and triggers a variety of adverse outcomes for adolescents. It can cause and worsen childhood illness. Children often experience feelings of loss and abandonment. They may develop behavioral problems, have an increased risk of school suspensions and expulsions, and exhibit aggressive and antisocial behavior. These children are also more likely to have poor physical and mental health as adults.

continued

Effects on families

According to the 2015 report, [Removing Barriers to Opportunity for Parents With Criminal Records and Their Children](#), parental incarceration reduces family resources and increases family poverty in several ways including:

- Depriving children of parental financial support and care;
- Reducing parental employment and earnings ability upon release;
- Increasing the likelihood that they will return to criminal activity; and
- Raising out-of-pocket expenses for other family members who have to pay transportation costs for prison visits, higher phone bills, money for prison accounts, and other bills.

In many situations, the children are placed with a relative or placed in foster care when a custodial parent is arrested, prompting initiation of a child support case.

This creates a child support caseload segment of non-custodial mothers with child support obligations who have a difficult time meeting their child support responsibilities during incarceration and upon release.

Forty-one percent of parents in state prisons reported a current medical problem, 20 percent had a history of physical or sexual abuse, and 9 percent reported homelessness. Sixty-seven percent of parents met the criteria for substance abuse or dependence and 57 percent met criteria for a mental health problem. Mothers were significantly more likely to have dealt with these issues than fathers, with the exception of substance abuse or dependence, which was about the same for both. Incarceration does not address these problems, and they will persist as barriers to successful reentry after release from prison.



PARENTS IN STATE PRISONS

- 41%** reported a current medical problem
- 20%** had a history of physical or sexual abuse
- 9%** reported homelessness
- 67%** met criteria for substance abuse or dependence
- 57%** met criteria for a mental health problem

OCSE supports evidence-based approaches

By using evidence and family-centered strategies, we can enhance the effectiveness of standard enforcement practices to create a fair and smarter child support system in the community, the courtroom, and the cellblock. Our goal of improving child support services for incarcerated and reentering parents is the same as it is for all other parents — secure regular support payments for children.

The family-centered strategies most applicable to incarcerated parents include setting realistic orders, facilitating rapid case reviews and adjustments during periods of incarceration, providing parents with arrears management and debt compromise programs, and helping connect them to jobs and other needed services upon release. Offices should also explore coordinating with the child welfare agency, if involved, to ensure that the case is appropriate for enforcement (see OCSE Information Memorandum 12-02, [Requests for Locate Services, Referrals, and Electronic Interface](#)).

The children at the heart of our mission count on us to treat their parents fairly. When we do, parents improve their compliance, their connections with their children, and their contributions to their community.

For child support-specific information, visit the OCSE [Incarcerated Groups/Reentry](#) and [State by State-How to Change a Child Support Order](#) webpages.

Available resources

The Bureau of Justice Assistance established the [National Resource Center on Justice-Involved Women](#) in 2010 to serve as a resource for policymakers and practitioners. There are other helpful resources available including the following essential tools and readings.

[Jail Tips Sheet](#)

[The Gender-Responsive Strategies Project: Jail Applications](#)

[Ten Truths That Matter When Working With Justice Involved Women](#)

[National Institute of Corrections – Women Offenders](#)

Medicaid opportunities for reentering individuals

Madeleine Solan, Social Science Analyst,
HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary
for Planning and Evaluation

Recent HHS [Medicaid guidance](#) will improve access to health care for justice-involved individuals transitioning from incarceration back to their communities. This guidance, released in April, clarifies three major policy areas:

- States can suspend, rather than terminate, Medicaid eligibility during periods of incarceration making it easier for individuals to use their Medicaid coverage immediately after release;
- Individuals who are currently on probation, parole, or in-home confinement are not considered inmates of a public institution and can receive full Medicaid coverage, if eligible; and
- States have the option of providing coverage to Medicaid-eligible individuals living in community halfway houses where they have freedom of movement.

Roughly 95 percent of incarcerated individuals will eventually return to their communities, making access to health care a key public health issue.

As a result, as many as 96,000 justice-involved individuals can gain access to health care coverage annually. Additionally, if states have procedures in place to promptly lift Medicaid suspensions when individuals are released, they can receive timely access to Medicaid-covered services during their transition back to their community.

Medical, mental health, and addiction problems

Obtaining access to health care is a key part of the reentry process for individuals leaving the justice system because they tend to have substantially [higher rates of medical, psychiatric, and addiction problems](#) than the general public. A [U.S. Department of Justice](#) document states that approximately 40 percent of people in jail or prison report having a current chronic condition and almost 20 percent report ever having an infectious disease. In terms of behavioral health, more than half of individuals in prison or jail report having a [mental](#)

[health condition](#), and about half (53 percent of all state prisoners and 45 percent of all federal prisoners) met the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders criteria for [drug dependence](#).

There are [2.2 million people currently incarcerated](#) in prison or jail and another 4.7 million people under probation or parole in the United States. Roughly 95 percent of incarcerated individuals will eventually return to their communities, making access to health care a key public health issue.

Access to care is critical

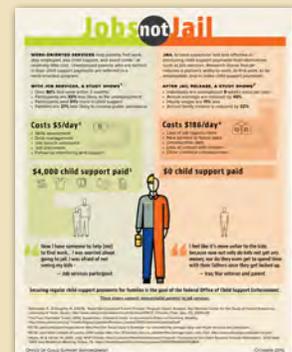
The health benefits under the Medicaid program can play a key role in improving the health of these individuals and provide a stabilizing effect for other aspects of reentry. It is difficult to obtain employment if someone has an untreated mental health condition or lacks access to blood pressure medication. It is hard to reconnect with family when the risk of unexpected medical costs adds a layer of financial stress on already strained resources.

[Access to health care coverage and services](#) is especially important in the first few weeks after release when the risk of relapse, reoffending, and even death, is most acute. Medicaid coverage connects individuals to the care they need once they are in the community and can help decrease emergency department visits, as well as decrease mortality and recidivism for justice-involved individuals.

For more information, read the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services letter, *To Facilitate successful re-entry for individuals transitioning from incarceration to their communities.*](#)

Jobs Not Jails infographic

Child support programs and courts across the country are connecting noncustodial parents to job services as an alternative to jail, achieving promising results. Job services are effectively helping parents find work, stay employed, pay child support, and avoid crime — at relatively little cost. This comparative infographic, [“Jobs Not Jail,”](#) contrasts the impactful costs and benefits. It displays how courts are successfully leveraging work-oriented services to achieve child support compliance from noncustodial parents who were once unemployed or underemployed.



Enrolling justice-involved people in Medicaid

Council of State Governments Justice Center Staff

In an effort to reduce recidivism and the public cost of emergency room visits by uninsured patients, two California counties — San Diego and Imperial — are using enrollment programs to increase access to Medicaid-covered physical and behavioral health services for people involved with their criminal justice systems.

Although the two counties share a border, their justice systems are vastly different. San Diego is an urban county with an estimated 14.7 percent of the population living below the poverty line. The county has approximately 5,000 people in its jails and more than 13,000 adults under probation supervision. Neighboring Imperial County is rural and 23.6 percent of its population lives in poverty. Imperial County averages a jail population of 500, and has fewer than 2,000 adults on probation.

Imperial County

In Imperial County, Catholic Charities — a faith-based nonprofit organization — runs a privately funded program that helps people involved with the justice system enroll in Medi-Cal, California’s Medicaid program.

Using a list generated by the county Sheriff’s Office, Catholic Charities’ enrollment program targets people who are one to three weeks from release from Imperial County jails. Enrollment assistance sessions take place every other week inside the county’s two jail facilities. For those who are released between enrollment sessions, support is available at the Catholic Charities office and at the Probation Department’s Day Reporting Center.

As a nonprofit organization, Catholic Charities does not have direct access to state or county Medi-Cal records, so it relies on staying in contact with the people it has assisted in order to monitor application outcomes.

Because Imperial County shares borders with Mexico, Arizona, and San Diego County, people in the county jail are often residents of other jurisdictions. Though it can offer little healthcare-related help to non-California residents, Catholic Charities’ reach does extend beyond Imperial County — the organization is able to help people who reside in San Diego County submit Medi-Cal applications.

San Diego County

San Diego County uses funding from a 2014 California Department of Health Care Services Outreach and Enrollment Grant to enroll adults who became eligible under the Affordable Care Act in Medi-Cal while they’re still in jail or under probation supervision.

As part of the enrollment process, people in jail who are Medi-Cal eligible are given the option to attend a class about Medi-Cal benefits and the application process. People who are within 60 days prior to release and in need of health insurance can then meet with an application assister from the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) or from community-based nonprofits like Vista Community Clinic and Family Health Centers of San Diego.

Application assistance is available at each of the county’s seven jail facilities, in hospitals where people serving jail sentences receive in-patient care, and at community-based organizations throughout the county for people who have already been released. For people on probation, HHSA social workers or contract staff are available for enrollment assistance at every San Diego County Probation Department office that serves adults.

Since the enrollment program began in June 2014, more than 5,000 of its participants have been approved for Medi-Cal coverage.



“If it wasn’t for the close working relationships among our county departments and community-based partner organizations, these kinds of results wouldn’t be possible,” said San Diego Chief Probation Officer Adolfo Gonzales, who is also a former police chief and chief investigator for the County District Attorney’s Office. “From the beginning, the Probation and Sheriff’s Departments and County HHSA met regularly to set up the initiative and make sure it was off to a successful start. We’ve kept in touch and shared essential data all along the way, benefitting not only the county but the whole community.”

The County Probation Department tracks enrollment efforts through an online dashboard developed by HHSA, which collects data on application outcomes and benefit utilization for people on probation who are enrolled. HHSA tracks application statuses for everyone who received Medi-Cal application assistance, and follows applications even after the applicants are released from jail or complete probation.

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Originally published by [The Council of State Governments Justice Center](#), last modified July 19, 2016. Used with permission.

'Fathers Building Futures' after incarceration

Jeri Clausing, Freelance Writer, *Fathers Building Futures*

When Vincent Aragon finished his three-year prison sentence, he faced a lot more than the daunting challenge of being a former felon in a depressed job market.

Aragon, the father of two, owed more than \$20,000 in back child support. Much of it had continued to build and accrue interest while he was behind bars because he only earned \$45 a month. To make matters worse, New Mexico suspended his driver's license for lack of payment.

"It feels horrible," he said. "It feels like nothing is attainable. It's super hard to get a decent job without a driver's license. And you still owe on this support. You also know they can put out a warrant on you at any time for not paying it. And they won't let you see your kids if you're not paying child support, which makes it hard if you're trying to turn your life around. Nobody believes in you."

Life today

Five years later, Aragon has a full-time job, is in the process of buying his own home, and has full custody of his 9-year-old daughter. The court forgave his debt on her back child support. He makes monthly child support payments for his 6-year-old son, whom he sees regularly. Aragon's son will also have his own room when he visits his father and sister in their new home soon.

"Life is good," says Aragon. "My worst day today is still better than my best day back then." He credits his success to [Fathers Building Futures](#), an initiative launched by New Mexico's non-profit [PB&J Family Services](#) that offers parenting education, family reunification, and job training and placement for fathers during and after incarceration.

Breaking the cycle

In New Mexico, one out of every 28 children has a parent behind bars. State child support laws prohibit incarcerated parents from modifying their judgments once they have been sentenced to jail or prison time. In most cases, the incarcerated parents' child support obligations continue to accrue as if they are working full-time at a minimum-wage job, even though these parents typically have little to no prison income.

The average incarcerated New Mexico parent with a child support judgment enters prison owing \$10,000, and leaves with a debt of \$20,000. After their release, the courts can garnish up to 50 percent of their income to pay their arrears. This creates added economic instability for former felons already having a hard time finding stable employment.

"A lot of them will just give up," Aragon said. "Some will fight for six months or a year, and then revert to



Vince Aragon at Fathers Building Futures

a life of drugs and crime. I understand that we put ourselves in these situations, but nine times out of 10, we had a drug addiction that we couldn't control. It's not that we didn't want to, we couldn't."

Legislative reform

Director Emet Ma'ayan understands their struggle and wants to do more. With the support of the Child Support Enforcement Division and the Fathers Building Futures board of directors, he is developing a legislative solution to create a more effective and realistic statewide child support system for incarcerated parents.

"We want to change the law so that anyone who goes to prison owing child support can receive a modification that requires them to pay 50 percent of their prison earnings rather than 50 percent of a nonexistent minimum wage job," Ma'ayan said. "This way every parent continues to provide what support they can, and these parents don't leave prison with heavy debt that kills their new careers before they can even start. It's good for the parent, good for the state's child support enforcement program, and — most important — it's good for the children."

For more information, call 505-341-9034 or visit the [Fathers Building Futures](#) website.

Fathers Building Futures started in 2012 with pilot project funding from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office of Family Assistance. The project's mission is to ensure that parents facing barriers imposed by previous incarceration have the best opportunities for success — financially, emotionally, and socially.

The program provides previously incarcerated parents with employment and job training in trades that include woodworking, auto detailing, mobile power washing, and truck driving.

All program participants with child support obligations must make their court-ordered payments. Because of this requirement, Fathers Building Futures estimates that its participants have paid more than \$70,000 in child support debt.

Grandparents caring for grandchildren

John Langrock, OCSE

Editor's Note: This article pays tribute to the increasing numbers of grandparents who are playing a major role in raising grandchildren. This year, National Grandparents Day was celebrated on September 11.

In 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed congressional legislation proclaiming the first Sunday after Labor Day as National Grandparents Day. September was chosen to signify the “autumn years” of life. The day has a threefold purpose:

- Honor grandparents;
- Give grandparents an opportunity to show love for their children’s children; and
- Help children become aware of the strength, information, and guidance older people can offer.

The “traditional” family structure of the 1950s and 60s — two married parents and a stay-at-home mom — is a small percentage of the family arrangements today. There has been a significant increase in the number of households with two employed parents along with step-parenting and blended families. Today’s family configurations also include more never-married, single-parent households and families with cohabiting parents.

Over the last several decades, more grandparents are providing care to their grandchildren. A [2012 Census report](#) stated that recent trends in increased life expectancy, single parent families, and female employment have increased the likelihood that grandparents will actively help bring up their grandchildren. Between 1992 and 2012, there was a 3 percent increase in the number of children living with a grandparent, topping off at 10 percent in 2012.



In the U.S. in 2012, nearly 10 percent of the nation’s 65 million grandparents lived with at least one grandchild and 10 percent of the 17 million children lived with a grandparent. Here are more statistical highlights from the 2012 report:

- About 3 percent of all households contained at least one parent, grandparent, and grandchild; and it was the grandparents who maintained more than 60 percent of these households.
- Nearly 3 million grandparents had primary responsibility for grandchildren under the age of 18.
- Since 2007, about one-third of children who lived with a grandparent also had two parents present. In 2012, about 7 million children lived with a grandparent in either a parent-maintained or grandparent-maintained household and the majority of these children lived in a grandparent-maintained household.

In the U.S. in 2012, nearly 10 percent of the nation’s 65 million grandparents lived with at least one grandchild and 10 percent of the 17 million children lived with a grandparent.

Because so many grandparents have primary parenting roles for their grandchildren, local child support agencies should be prepared to provide the grandparents in their caseloads with useful information and guidance. Here are some helpful resources to keep in mind:

Child welfare organizations: State and local child support agencies should consider collaborating with child welfare agencies and service providers that have to find placement for children who must be removed from their parents. These agencies prefer to place the children with grandparents and other relatives because it maintains the children’s connections with their families.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC): Grandparents can file for the EITC if they are primary caregivers for grandchildren, step-grandchildren, or even adopted grandchildren. As long as the grandchild is within a certain age range, living in the grandparent’s household for more than half the year, and the annual tax filing reports and adjusted gross income are within specified limits, the grandparent is likely eligible for EITC.

continued

Texas brochure: The state Health and Human Services Commission electronic brochure, Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, provides information on programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, Food Stamps, and more. The brochure is in English and Spanish.

National Family Caregiver Support Program:

This organization provides services to caregivers, particularly grandparents. They offer an [Eldercare Locator](#) to help senior caregivers find services in their local communities. Read more in the article, [Innovative program supports grandparents raising grandchildren](#), in the May 2015 *Child Support Report*.



As increasing numbers of grandparents or other relatives take on more active roles or become the primary caregiver for their grandchildren, grandparents may have limited emotional or financial preparation for this new parenting role. The resource links in the box at right provide guidance to grandparents in their effort to parent, assistance in finding needed resources for the children, and also offer support and self-help information to the grandparent caregiver themselves.

For more information, contact John Langrock at john.langrock@acf.hhs.gov and visit the [OCSE Parents webpage](#). For information about the history of Grandparents Day, visit the [Generations United](#) website.

Parenting and Resource Information for Grandparents

[GrandFacts - State Fact Sheets:](#) State-by-state fact sheets with a comprehensive listing of state government resources

[Grandparents and Relatives Raising Grandchildren:](#) Community-based state resources gathered by grandparents raising grandchildren

[Children of Incarcerated Parents:](#) Impact of incarcerated parents on child's mental health, social behavior, and educational prospects

[National Family Caregiver Support Program:](#) Research articles on issues faced by grandparents providing care for grandchildren

[Grandparenting Today - Through the Eyes of a Child:](#) Short information briefs on child development, behavior, and interaction with family members

[Grandparents Raising Grandchildren:](#) A call to action to establish a network of services to support grandparent caregivers and their grandchildren

[The State of Grandfamilies in America:](#) Annual report that evaluates and ranks effective state laws and policies to support grandfamilies

[Taking Earned Income Tax Credit for a Grandchild:](#) Eligibility requirements for grandparents claiming earned income credit for grandchild



Attendees of the 22nd Annual Older Americans Month Information and Health Fair in Dallas stopped by the ACF Office of the Regional Administrator booth to pick up resource material including the Texas 'Grandparents as Caregivers' brochure.

ANALYSIS

Understanding and treating poverty

Marcella Wilson, PhD, CEO and Founder,
Transitions to Success

Many factors can affect an individual's health in addition to typical social influences, like racism, crime, and pollution. Problems related to employment, income, health care, food security, shelter, transportation, safety, and education are also social determinants of health. That is why we see people in poverty getting sick more often and not living as long as those who are well off. These people are not genetically predisposed to poverty; a combination of factors in the environment where they live causes their condition.

As a nation, we must learn to understand poverty not as a character flaw deserving of judgment, but as a treatable, condition that is based on environmental factors. The medical field recognizes environmentally based conditions as common, leading to a variety of health problems. By using a health care lens to understand and treat poverty, we can better use available services and offer real pathways to recovery.

Along with other environmentally based medical conditions, poverty has its own symptoms. The poor have higher rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, teen pregnancy, crime, and mental health and substance abuse disorders. Even intermittent food insecurity impacts the development of young children's brains, specifically white matter, gray matter, the hippocampus and amygdala, which are essential for learning and memory. To improve children's health and educational outcomes, we need to improve parents' health and economic self-sufficiency.

To be treatable under Medicaid at federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), all medical conditions require uniform protocols and analytics. Using the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, health professionals can make a note about these environmental impacts in their diagnoses of these individuals and the role that poverty may play in the health of these patients. This marker can help an individual qualify for more assistance.

Through the protocols offered by Transition To Success™ (TTS™), that person can receive a standard of care that is both evidence-based and measurable. By coordinating with providers in existing care networks, like Medicaid, TTS™ helps clients find the immediate help they need. Individuals who are eligible for other types of assistance, like human services, education, or government services, can receive additional help as they chart their transition out of poverty.

When we think about poverty as an environmentally caused condition instead of a choice, our focus shifts from noticing to solving the problem. The child support community can similarly help by thinking more broadly about ways to ensure success for parents. By addressing environmental factors (lack of food, heat, transportation, and medical care), we can make lasting improvements in parents' lives. As they recover from poverty and as their children receive the critical support they need, we all succeed. Real treatment leading to real outcomes — that is a win-win for everyone.

*For more information, contact Dr. Marcella Wilson, author of *Diagnosis Poverty: A new approach for understanding and treating an epidemic*, at 313-580-2672 or email her at mwilson@tts-llc.org.*

Treating environmentally based medical conditions

Environmental Exposure	Symptoms	Diagnosis	Standard of Care	Billable
Lead ingestion	Irritability, high blood pressure, long term neurological damage	Lead poisoning	Required	✓
Limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and exercise	Increased thirst, blurred vision	Type II diabetes	Required	✓
Cigarette smoking/Second hand	Wheezing, increased risk of cancer, asthma, COPD	Nicotine addiction	Required	✓
Racism, food insecurity, high crime rates, poor performing schools, unemployment, inadequate/unaffordable housing, lack of access to basic needs/resources, and limited access to quality health care and transportation	Increased rates of diabetes and high blood pressure, infant and maternal mortality, increased depression and mental health disorders, asthma, compromised immune system and brain development, higher death rates	Poverty (DSM V code)	Transition to Success™	FQHC's, some state Medicaid plans

PROMISING PRACTICES

Promoting job readiness online and offline

Gretchen Tressler, OCSE

Searching for employment is in itself a full-time job. Whether you are looking for a job requiring few skills or a career in a professional field, you still have to get your foot in the door. Child support offices, and especially case workers, can help bolster parents' job search efforts by sharing information about a variety of ways to increase job readiness.

Upskilling is a smart choice

Staying relevant in a changing job market is hard. Businesses want to hire talented workers who can do a variety of tasks. The World Economic Forum report on [The Future of Jobs for 2015-2020](#) states that some people are facing job insecurity because they have lower skill sets. As businesses adopt new technologies and more efficient processes that do the same work as employees with limited skills, their staffing needs change. Unskilled laborers are the ones who suffer. For job seekers, including parents in the child support program, this challenge also offers an opportunity. Individuals who try to make themselves more valuable to an employer by pursuing additional training — or upskilling — have a better chance of snagging or staying in a job.

By sharing different kinds of resources with unemployed parents, you are encouraging them to be active job seekers.

Unemployed parents can make themselves more hireable with free resources online, such as massive open online courses where anyone can informally audit certain college classes from major universities around the globe. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has a series called [You're a What?](#) that gives an in-depth look at uncommon jobs. Some of those featured are temporary, flexible, or freelance jobs, like dog walker, telemarketer, and online seller.

Libraries can be invaluable tools

A recent Pew study on [library use in American communities](#) shows that 48 percent of adults ages 16 or older rely at least somewhat on their local libraries for their job search. Another 70 percent rely on their libraries for education on new technologies. These numbers reinforce the fact that Americans with

lower incomes have fewer options to get online. Stay up-to-date on what job resources, adult education programming, patron assistance, and other services your local library offers. Read more about how you can extend outreach by partnering with libraries in the March 2013 *Child Support Report* article, "[Knowing Your Audience](#)."

Remember, some job seekers may not have access to the library during its regular hours. If they are underemployed or do not have jobs with a fixed weekly schedule, accessibility could be an issue. Child support offices need to remain sensitive to these facts by offering other resources to unemployed parents. Have hard copies of materials pointing job seekers to offline resources, like this short brochure about the Department of Labor's [CareerOneStop job assistance hotline](#). You will find several posters, brochures, rack cards, and other materials you can print out on the [Office of Disability Employment Policy publications page](#). Think about which parents could most benefit from offline outreach efforts. Put yourself in their shoes. Do you have materials that best meet their job search needs? Make sure the materials are not simply lists of website links. Ask for parents' feedback on what else you could provide.

By sharing different kinds of resources with unemployed parents, you are encouraging them to be active job seekers. Helping them maintain a positive, open attitude about the job search helps the child support program stay successful in promoting well-being for parents and children.

For more information about ways to help job-seeking parents on- or offline, check out the following Child Support Report stories, [Unemployed in today's job market](#) and [How can child support offices support employment services?](#)



According to the Pew Research Center report, [Libraries at the Crossroads](#), 48% of all Americans 16 and older say libraries help people find jobs.

In some demographic groups, the percentage is even larger.

- 58%** of Hispanics.
- 55%** of African Americans.
- 53%** of those in households with annual incomes under \$30,000.



Child Support Awareness Month

President Bill Clinton proclaimed August 1995 as "National Child Support Awareness Month" in honor of the 20th anniversary of the federal child support enforcement program. Many states, counties, and tribes continue to hold August recognition events to highlight the valuable contributions of their child support programs. Here are a few.

California



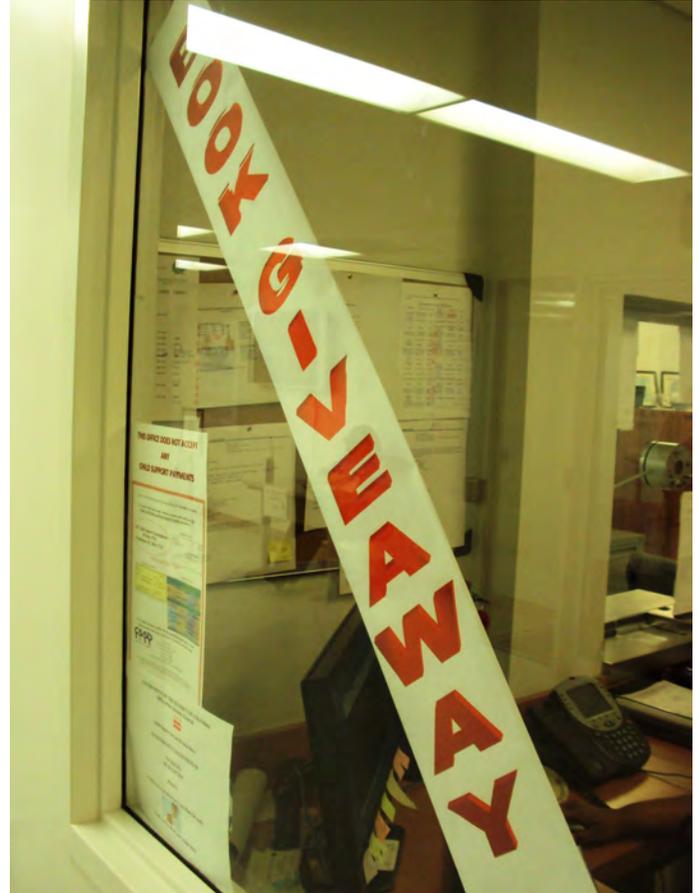
California's Department of Child Support Services celebrated Awareness Month with the slogan "Your Support Shapes Their Future." The department created a webpage with downloadable graphics for county child support agencies to use and hosted a calendar of events for the month. It also developed six separate posters and public service announcements — in English and Spanish — for county agencies. The state office and five county child support agencies donated backpacks and school supplies for local families. Governor Jerry Brown thanked parents for their commitment to their children, and various county agencies mailed thank you cards to paying parents.

The department highlighted the numerous events during the month on its [Inside DCSS](#) blog.

Chickasaw Nation

Nearly 400 people attended the eighth annual Child Support Awareness Month "I Love My Child" Family Fun Day on August 6. This community event celebrates children, parents, and child support professionals. The day featured over 30 different informational and service booths, activities, and live entertainment. More than 30 volunteers helped make the event a success.

District of Columbia



The Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia, Child Support Services Division put its spotlight on childhood literacy in August. The office held a children's book drive and giveaway to promote literacy and to encourage parents to spend quality time with their children. "We all benefit when our children succeed, and we must ensure that District youth have the resources they need to grow, learn, and prosper. I am proud that our Child Support Services Division helps families every day obtain the financial support that they need," said Attorney General Karl A. Racine.

continued

Kansas



Gov. Brownback and members of the Kansas Department of Labor and Child Support Services offices.

Governor Sam Brownback signed a proclamation designating August as Kansas Child Support Awareness Month. The Department of Children and Families Child Support Services staff used the month to help parents who were in arrears and faced prosecution for failure to pay. They held Child Support Bench Warrant Amnesty Day on August 12 to give parents a chance to begin making payments without fear of prosecution. Parents could go to one of the designated amnesty locations, pay a specified amount of money, and have their warrants lifted.

Illinois



From left: IL Child Support Services Director Pamela Lowry ; Lt. Gov. Sanguinetti; Director Norwood; Asst. Deputy Administrator Christine Towles; and OCSE Regional Program Manager Mike Vicars.

The Child Support Services Program organized a “Brighter Tomorrows” outreach event where Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti presented a proclamation designating August Child Support Awareness Month to IL Department of Healthcare and Family Services Director Felicia Norwood. Various officials provided a brief overview of the child support program and stressed how important it is that both parents provide economic and emotional support to children. Attendees could visit a resource fair where vendors provided information on programs and opportunities ranging from supportive assistance for veterans, to fatherhood programs and health and human services.

Maryland



Maryland Child Support Enforcement Agency Director of Special Projects Tywana Taylor (far right) with Baltimore City Child Support Office staff.

The Maryland Child Support Enforcement Administration invited 400 noncustodial parents with new warrants for civil nonsupport actions to come to “Operation Reconciliation” in August to get their warrants quashed without fear that they would be arrested. Several organizations worked together to make the event successful, including Baltimore City’s judiciary and sheriff’s offices and Maryland state government leaders. They quashed more than 100 warrants while also providing information about employment and educational training opportunities and community-based reentry services.

Missouri



Left: Child support booth at the Missouri State Fair Right: Missouri Family Support Division Director Julie Gibson holds the governor’s proclamation.

The Missouri Family Support Division celebrated Child Support Awareness Month with a proclamation by the governor and conducted outreach at many community events. The Family Support Division staff participated in four back to school fairs across the state. They also had a child support booth at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia. Staff showed their dedication to their families and communities by participating in activities throughout the month, such as participating in backpack and school supply drives and collecting jars of peanut butter to send home with children.

continued

Missouri — Jackson County



Jackson County Executive Frank White, Jr., and Melissa Mauer-Smith, the director of the Prosecuting Attorney Office's Family Support Division, were at the presentation of the Proclamation that declared August Child Support Awareness Month in the county. For more photos, visit the [Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney's Facebook](#) page.

Missouri — Warrensburg



During Child Support Awareness Month, staff from the Warrensburg Child Support Office collected markers for donation as part of the Partnering Among Communities for Kids (PACK) drive. The event provided over 650 kids with school supplies and 67 received haircuts. The staff also helped hand out 10 pallets of food to families in need.

Nevada — Clark County



The District Attorney Family Support Division held its Child Support Awareness/Back-to-School Outreach event on Aug. 6. The event offered parents with suspended driver's licenses or bench warrants a chance to meet with a case manager to work out a compromise to help them get back on track without the fear of being arrested. Parents could also ask questions,

attend modification workshops, and get job and case management assistance. Backpacks with new school supplies were handed out to more than 350 children.

Nevada — Elko County



The District Attorney Child Support Enforcement Division participated in a women's expo in early August. Staff answered child support questions, passed out application packets, and gave business cards to 200 attendees. For Child Support Awareness Month, the staff donated backpacks filled with school supplies that were used as giveaways for three lucky children during the Expo. Families appreciated the opportunity to meet with child support staff on a Saturday. The event was so successful that Elko County child support office staff have pledged to participate next year.

Oregon



YouTube

In keeping with its 2016 motto, "Help Us Help You," the Oregon Child Support Program asked customers to take an online Child Support Awareness Month survey. Program Director Kate Cooper-Richardson and her staff asked for feedback so they could make the new child support computer system serve their customers in the most efficient manner. She explained the appeal during a [YouTube video](#). When the survey closed, over 1,100 people had completed the survey.

continued

Penobscot Nation



Left to right: Child Support Program Coordinator Mali Dana; Social Services Director Brooke Loring; Administrative Coordinator/Case Aid Nastassja Francis; Social Services Business Manager Andrew Dana

The Penobscot Nation Child Support Agency (PNCSA), located in Maine, held educational and community outreach activities throughout August. PNCSA hung an awareness month sign in front of the office and placed educational posters throughout the tribal departments. During the Tribal Community Days celebration, staff spoke with people who stopped by the child support educational table and nearly 40 completed child support surveys. PNCSA participated in a family fun night in collaboration with the family support specialist and family violence prevention coordinator.

Tennessee



Tennessee department staff and child support professionals wear green to support Child Support Awareness Month.

Once Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam proclaimed August Child Support Awareness Month, the state Department of Human Services conducted various commemoration activities. Tennessee lit prominent structures across the state with green lights to symbolize child support awareness and hung banners outside state office buildings. The department believes in a two-generation approach that has a special focus on the child and the parent, and that child support plays a role in supporting the whole family in reaching its greatest potential. Child support offices held special events that included collecting school supplies, a fun walk, and participating in a community baby event.

Virginia



Nutzy, mascot of the Richmond Flying Squirrels, showing his support for the VA Dept. of Child Support Enforcement.

On August 6, the Virginia Division of Child Support Enforcement went to Richmond's South of the James Farmers Market to commemorate Child Support Awareness Month. As people entered the market, division employees were giving out \$5 in Farmers Bucks to encourage them to stop by the child support booth. Shoppers could use the coupons at market vendors who participated in SNAP. As people stopped by the booth, employees from child support and the attorney general's office offered shoppers "[Every Child Needs Support](#)" brochures and tote bags.

Child Support Report

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