

Texas Study on the Accuracy of NDNH Matches

Texas believed one way to increase caseworker trust in the quality of NDNH data, especially new hire, was to independently ascertain the accuracy of matches returned from the NDNH. So the State conducted a study to independently verify the accuracy and value of NDNH data. The Office of the Attorney General's Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) randomly chose a sample of 220 NDNH matches that were based on new hire (W4) data submitted by employers from around the country. State staff called the employers identified in each match to verify the information provided in each data element. The amount of worker hours required to undertake the study was approximately 116 hours; four full-time staff to make phone calls over three days and two full-time staff to enter the data over two days.

The study is notable both for its having been proactively undertaken, and for its results. The study shows that the NDNH provides accurate and important information to caseworkers. The table summarizes the percent of matches that included key data elements and the percent of the matches in which the given information was correct:

Data Element	% of Matches That Include This Element	% of These Matches in Which the Information Is Correct
Non-Custodial Parent's SSN	99%	98%
Non-Custodial Parent's Name	not included in survey	97%
Employer's Name	97%	95%
Employer's FEIN	98%	96%
Employer's City	100%	96%
Employer's State	99%	96%

Table 1: Accuracy of NDNH Matches Returned to Texas

In at least 95% of the matches, the employer's Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), city, and State were provided and were correct. In addition, the survey verified that in 75% of the cases the NCP had worked at one time for the employer provided by the NDNH, and in 63% of the cases the NCP was still employed there.

The fact that nearly two-thirds of the matches provided the NCP's current employer is particularly remarkable. The NDNH is intended to locate the more mobile individuals, who sometimes end up not working any hours for the employer that reported them, or do so only for a short period of time. The results of this study clearly indicate that new hire data is doing its job. Another finding that is quite striking is that 98% of the employers were not on Texas' automated statewide system, the Texas Child Support Enforcement System (TXCSES). The results of the study underscore the NDNH's role as a provider of new, accurate, and valuable information.

Data that is accurate and timely is most valuable if used in conjunction with other child support improvements, such as automated wage withholding. Texas recently automated the issuance of wage withholdings with remarkable results. Texas reports that in the month of December 1999 alone, in cases where no money had been received during the previous two months, automated wage withholdings increased collections by over \$4.2 million—a remarkable 32.6% of the total amount collected through wage withholding for that month.

Clearly, by proactively studying the accuracy of NDNH data and sharing the results—which demonstrate the usefulness and timeliness of the data—Texas increased its caseworkers' trust in new hire data. In addition, the experience of Texas shows that automated wage withholding can produce dramatic results in a short amount of time.

For further information on the Texas study, please contact Thomas Neal, Contracts Service Manager (Texas Office of the Attorney General) at (512) 460-6129.