



UPDATE: #1

Employing Early Intervention

State: Tennessee – Knox County

Practice: Case Stratification

The Tennessee Department of Human Services, Division of Child Support Services, developed an innovative project modeled after early intervention and case assessment techniques that had been used successfully in Australia. The early intervention techniques for project cases commenced prior to order establishment. Once the order was established, Tennessee based case stratification on an assessment that identified the financial circumstances and parental characteristics that might predict the likelihood of compliance. The case stratification was also used to identify which interventions might be appropriate for the case, such as more frequent personal contact with NCPs, prompt modification of orders if necessary, and additional reminders to NCPs (including monthly reminders by mail or telephone).

Case stratification allowed the child support agency to better align enforcement techniques to individual case circumstances, enabling the County to use staff resources more effectively and efficiently in addition to identifying NCPs who were in need of services. NCPs that were unemployed or underemployed were referred to the Child Support Employment and Parenting Partnership, an existing program designed to address barriers to child support payment.

Time Frame:

The grant period was September 30, 2004 through August 2006, which included a six month no cost extension.

Results:

The early intervention strategies used in the project cases, such as joint meetings with the parties prior to order establishment and appointment reminders, were generally successful in producing positive child support enforcement outcomes as compared to the control group. Project cases were significantly more likely to have an order established than control cases. After a year, 56 percent of project cases had an order established compared to 41 percent of control cases.

The project had the greatest impact on public assistance cases. **Fifty percent of public assistance project cases had orders established as compared to only 22 percent of the public assistance control cases.**

Project cases also paid more than control cases on average. Payments, which are measured as a percent of current support due, averaged 86 percent among all project cases and 73 percent among all control cases.

Again, the difference was greatest for public assistance cases. **The percent paid among project cases receiving public assistance averaged 81 percent compared to 44 percent for control cases.**

In total, after a year, there were fewer arrears among project cases than control cases. The median amount of arrears was \$942 among project cases and \$2,442 among control cases. There was a larger gap between the mean of arrears: \$1,365 among project cases and \$4,002 among control cases.

Costs:

Total project expenditures were \$214, 828, which included the Federal grant, the state share and other Federal matching funds. Of this amount, the majority of the funds were spent on the contractors for technical assistance and evaluation (\$195,828) while some funds (\$18,000) went to pay the State grant manager and travel expenses (\$1,000).

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UPDATE: #2

Managing Existing Arrears

State: Massachusetts

Practice: Focus on the Cases with the Highest Arrears

After an analysis showed 10% of obligors owed more than 50% of the total debt, Massachusetts initiated a Top Ten Arrears project, where caseworkers regularly review the ten cases in their caseloads owing the highest amount of arrears to see what actions could be taken.

Caseworkers were asked to track whether these cases were eligible for case closure, increased enforcement or some other action. Continuous updating of the Top Ten lists allows a systematic way to address this small group of obligors who owe more than half the total arrears.

Time Frame:

The results reflect the period June 1, 2005 through August 31, 2006.

Results:

The first Top Ten list distributed to the team leaders included a total of 260 obligors. The **arrears balances for these obligors were reduced by \$9.2 million, which was 14% of the total \$67.7 million owed by this group.** When the project was expanded to every caseworker, the arrears balances for almost 1600 Top Ten cases were **reduced by \$48 million** either through collections, updated case data or case closure. Furthermore, **282 of these obligors are making monthly payments on time and in full**; another 115 have made some payments after the caseworker contacted them; 859 have been referred for specific enforcement actions such as license suspension and contempt actions; case closing letters have been sent in 242 cases; and 174 cases have been closed. In one case, the caseworker secured payment of more than \$92,000.

Costs: No additional costs. This project is incorporated into standard casework.

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UPDATE: #3

Improving Locate and Enforcement

State: Oklahoma

Practice: Automating Workers' Compensation Intercept

The Oklahoma Child Support Enforcement Division (CSED) Center for Coordinated Programs has automated its Workers' Compensation (WC) match and intercept process. Data exchanges are conducted with three State entities and a vendor and then liens are automatically printed in local offices throughout the State.

Oklahoma formed a WC Process Improvement Team, which included experts from child support, data services, Oklahoma University's Center for Professional Management, CSED Center for Coordinated Programs, and CSED Center for System Technology. Representatives met, coordinated, and corresponded with State officials at Compsource (a State WC fund for small and middle-sized businesses), WC Court, and the State Insurance Commission. Compsource sends data to CSED on a weekly basis. The WC Court sends data monthly. Then, every day CSED sends data to its vendor to intercept WC personal injury claims for obligors with child support debts of \$50 or more.

Time Frame:

The Improvement Team met twice a month over a two year period, from January 2004 until January 2006. Two months prior to statewide rollout in January 2006, the team chose two pilot child support offices to test the lien automation process. Prior to implementation, the team members conducted training for all child support offices.

Results:

By using multiple data sources and consolidating them into one comprehensive collection process, CSED has saved money, time, and effort in working what had been a troublesome part of the Division's enforcement caseload. ***In 2006, WC collections increased to more than \$3.1 million compared to \$1 million each year prior to the automation.***

Costs:

Start-up costs for the project were approximately \$300,000 which covered the cost of programming so the different systems could share data. The continuing costs of the program are \$55 per match, which ends up costing the State approximately \$6,000-\$7,000 per month. Given that the match is bringing an additional \$150,000-\$200,000 per month in collections, the State feels that the cost is well worth it.

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PAID UPDATE #4

Order Review and Modification

State: Michigan

Practice: Audio and Video Teleconferencing for Incarcerated Parents

The Michigan Supreme Court's Prisoner Support Adjustment Project studied prisoners' use of review and modification processes and tested the effectiveness of using audio and video technology to allow prisoners access to Michigan child support proceedings. The Michigan Office of Child Support (OCS) provided monthly data-match reports on child support cases and prisoner records. The Department of Corrections (DOC) coordinated prisoner appearances by electronic means. Local circuit courts supplied facilities, equipment, and staff to fulfill support modification and judicial duties.

In addition to quickly identifying prisoner cases, modifying orders during imprisonment and implementing prospective support orders that are effective upon the prisoners' release, the project also sought to overcome procedural barriers. Using administrative processes to review cases and holding electronic-appearance hearings only when a party objects to a proposed outcome (which happened in fewer than 3 percent of the cases) permits faster modifications and reduces the number of support modification hearings. Upon request, prisoners in the project were able to receive free legal representation to modify support obligations with assistance from two Michigan law schools. Prisoners requested free legal representation in 838 cases. Supervised by a licensed attorney, law students gained valuable experience preparing cases and representing clients. The project also developed user-friendly materials for inmates to request modification of their support obligations without hiring an attorney.

Time Frame:

The project ran 17 months from start to finish. For the first six months, work focused on planning; creating a database, reports, and forms; negotiating with courts; and, working with law school legal clinics. The time spent working the cases and collecting data lasted about 10-11 months.

Results:

Statewide, support orders were modified in 3,370 prisoner-related cases and **support amounts were reduced, on average, from \$220 per month to \$19 per month.** For one year, these modifications should **prevent the accumulation of over \$8 million in uncollectible past-due support and surcharges.**

In pilot counties 367 hearings were conducted with the prisoner appearing via telephone conferencing or interactive video technology. The DOC estimates that it saves at least \$170 per hearing when prisoners "attend" without the need for transport and escorts.

Electronic appearances saved the State over \$60,000 in transportation and prisoner escort costs during the project.

Costs:

The Michigan Supreme Court received a SIP grant of \$100,000 which helped pay for start-up and the costs of coordinating the project. Additional costs were absorbed by the Court and by using existing local resources. If a State were to undertake a similar project, costs would include the coordination of the project, increased staff time and administrative costs for reprioritizing review and modification work as well as telephone or video conference equipment and connections for those sites that don't already have such equipment. For example, a video teleconference unit that was purchased for one county, along with a year's connection service, cost about \$20,000. Some counties were able to do telephone conferences using existing equipment.

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PAID UPDATE: #5

Setting Appropriate Orders

State: **California – San Francisco**

Practice: Enhanced Parental Involvement Collaboration (EPIC)

EPIC was designed to reduce the large number of cases in which imputed or presumed income was used to establish child support orders. The City and County of San Francisco did a special project testing the impact that enhanced customer service through proactive, intensive, and early engagement with noncustodial parents would have on both increasing the amount of child support payments collected on behalf of children and avoiding the accumulation of unpaid debt. The project also sought to increase the efficiency of the order establishment procedure.

The EPIC project emphasized personal contact with NCPs when possible, using easy-to-understand written communication followed by telephone contact if no response was received. These were supplemented by enhanced education and follow-up activities such as customized service-of-process and status conferences. These activities were aimed at increasing the level of involvement of NCPs in the order establishment process, thereby reducing the need to rely on default judgments and/or presumed levels of NCP income. With NCP involvement, orders could be set at an appropriate amount and on-going compliance with child support obligations over the long term could be promoted.

Time Frame:

The SIP grant period was from July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2006. Case information was tracked over three consecutive quarters from January 1, 2006 through September 30, 2006.

Results:

The project produced dramatic results in the approximately 850 cases in which support orders were obtained. Telephone contact with NCPs was particularly effective. Among the nearly 400 experimental group cases with orders, the project saw an **increase in collections of \$53,000** over the 439 control group cases during the 9-month period in 2006 as well as a **slowing in the growth rate of arrears by \$129,432**. As of June 2007, the gap between unpaid current support in non-EPIC and EPIC cases grew to \$139,423. The unpaid current support in the EPIC cases represents about 1/3 of the total unpaid current support. Further, since the project ended, between June 2006 and June 2007, **65 percent of the original test cases have been paying current support and have no arrearages** so they require no enforcement.

The cumulative total of FFY2004 Collections on Current Support at the end of June 2004, before the project started, was 59 percent. By June 2006, when the project ended, that figure increased to 61 percent. In June 2007, it had increased again to

62 percent.

Additional positive results included a dramatic reduction in default orders (11 percent in the experimental group versus 65 percent in the control group) and virtual elimination of reliance on presumed income to calculate order amounts (compared to a reliance rate of approximately 20 percent in control group cases) and an overall improvement in the department's performance in collection on current support. Personal assessments with NCPs have driven down the cost of outsourcing process service and reduced the number of staff assigned to case establishment for an **overall cost savings in salaries and consultant services of \$120,145.**

Costs:

The costs of this initiative exceeded the \$200,000 SIP grant with one time design and implementation costs. However, the performance improvement was considered to be well worth the investment. Currently, the number of staff needed to manage all new cases for the department has been cut in half. There are also fewer support staff needed to follow-up on locate tasks.

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PAID

UPDATE: #6

Employing Early Intervention

State: Pennsylvania – Crawford County

Practice: Employment Training Services for Noncustodial Parents

Many noncustodial parents (NCPs) do not have the ability to meet their financial responsibilities to their children because of job dislocation, literacy issues, and other barriers to employment. Pennsylvania's State Department of Labor and Industry office (Career Link) in Crawford County has the resources to help NCPs overcome these barriers. The Crawford County Domestic Relations Section (DRS) has developed an effective collaboration with Career Link to help NCPs meet their child support obligations.

The partnership provides the resources and monitoring necessary to meet the goals of the program:

- Provide NCPs with the tools to become employable and better provide for their families.
- Increase collections for the children and provide a non-punitive enforcement tool that is productive for the parent and the community.

The program has several distinct components:

1. The NCP receives a court order to search for work at Career Link.
2. Career Link provides the NCP with tools to assist in his or her job search (e.g., attendance at job search workshops, job placement assistance).
3. There is a weekly communication process between DRS and Career Link staff.

Career Link staff is assisting DRS staff to understand how their employment website and job referral process work, enabling DRS staff to better manage client job search efforts. Also, DRS now obtains copies of sign in sheets from Career Link for chronically unemployed clients to better assess both how much time the client actually spends in job search and what services the client may need in order to become employed.

Time Frame:

The program started in September 2006 and continues to the present.

Results:

Crawford County is a rural county with approximately 4,000 cases. Similar to other rural counties, Crawford faces many economic challenges (e.g. job dislocation).

The result of the collaboration between DRS and Career Link are impressive. From October 2006 through June 2007:

- :
- 144 NCPs have been ordered to participate in the program
 - 87 NCPs have been employed or removed from the program – 77 are employed and 10 were removed
 - 57 NCPs are active participants
 - 80 NCPs would have been scheduled for contempt if not for their participation in the program while only 3 NCPs were actually scheduled for contempt after failure to participate in the program

As a direct result of the collaboration, collections between October 2006 and June 2007 totaled \$86,536 for the county. **Projected over the Federal Fiscal Year, this one initiative will increase collections by almost 2%.**

Costs:

There are no specific costs associated with this project. The monitoring and job training costs are paid from existing budgets.

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Improving Locate and Enforcement

State: Illinois

Practice: Working with the Address Change Service

In 2002, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, Division of Child Support Enforcement (DCSE), initiated an investigation to determine the feasibility of interfacing with the United States Postal Service's (USPS) Address Change Service (ACS) in an effort to reduce the amount of undeliverable mail returned from the USPS. Illinois estimated that of the 3,000,000 mail pieces sent annually by DCSE, 300,000 pieces (10 percent) were returned as undeliverable.

Recognizing the need to improve mail processing, Illinois implemented an automated interface with ACS in January 2003. Although the initial focus was to reduce the manual effort of processing undeliverable mail, Illinois also programmed its child support database, Key Information Delivery System (KIDS), to update addresses automatically from the electronic notices received from ACS.

Time Frame:

The testing of the interface with ACS started in September 2002 and went into full production January 2003.

Results:

The **total annual savings** for Fiscal Year 2007, which include postal discount savings of **\$292,030** and mail processing savings of **\$225,053**, are **\$517,083**. These savings are based on the elimination of forwarding fees and the reduction of staff and work hours to process undeliverable mail and update participant addresses manually.

Additional savings realized but not included in this analysis are the reduction in postage gained by not sending mail to an undeliverable address, reduction in mailroom staff time required to sort undeliverable mail and mail forwarded notices, elimination of mailing Address Information Requests to post offices to validate addresses, and elimination of manually validating addresses.

Also not included in the annual savings are the efficiencies and benefits from the KIDS interface with ACS, which has allowed Illinois to accomplish the following:

- **Reduce staff in the mail processing unit from 17 workers to 2 workers.**

- Electronically enter an end date to old addresses based on the undeliverable reason codes provided by USPS. If a new change of address is provided, the address where the mail was originally sent is electronically end dated and the new address is activated.
- Electronically enter new mail addresses provided by USPS.
- Mail an address verification letter directly to the new mail address.
- Eliminate backlog of undeliverable mail.
- Assist with the reduction of undistributed receipts.

Illinois is planning to expand the interface with ACS to update employer addresses.

Costs:

The programming required to develop the interface with ACS was 350 hours. There were approximately another 200 hours involved in getting the more than 250 documents generated by the automated system to be ACS compliant.

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NOTE :

Given Illinois' success with ACS, the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) conducted an analysis to determine if ACS could be implemented at a national level. Based on this analysis, ACS was not considered a viable option for OCSE since it required the user to send a piece of mail to match against the ACS system. With the exception of Federal Offset notices, OCSE does not send mail. However, the analysis offered insight into another product offered by the USPS, called the National Change of Address (NCOA). OCSE initiated analysis of the NCOA since it offered similar benefits to ACS. Whereas the ACS system was developed to assist the mail process in the forwarding of mail pieces, NCOA was developed to help private sector and Federal/State agencies manage their mailing lists. The NCOA offers States an opportunity to receive change of address information prior to sending mailings thus reducing costs associated with sending mail to incorrect addresses. OCSE is expecting to implement the NCOA interface in the Fall of 2008.



Employing Early Intervention

State: **Missouri**

Practice: Sorting Cases to Improve Collections

Missouri's Family Support Division implemented a new approach to the enforcement of child support and medical support obligations. Previously, cases were divided into individual caseloads by alphabetic split. Under the new structure, the Missouri Automated Child Support System (MACSS) automatically assigns cases to a particular category based on the noncustodial parent's circumstance and specific criteria. Rather than individual caseloads, the cases in each category are worked by a team of individuals. Work activities for each category are generated to the appropriate team via system alerts, auto-generated forms, and category reports. If there is a change in circumstances, such that the case meets the criteria for a different category, MACSS automatically moves the case to the new category without worker intervention. The four categories are as follows.

1. NCP not paying, no enforcement remedies exist (e.g., NCP is receiving SSI or TANF benefits, s/he is incarcerated with no resources, cannot be located). These cases are monitored for changes in circumstances and/or location of NCP or NCP resources. Once enforcement action can be taken, the case moves to Category Two.
2. NCP not paying, enforcement remedies exist (i.e., the agency has taken enforcement action, however the case has not paid for three consecutive months so it does not yet meet the criteria for Category Four; or the case has an enforcement remedy available that has not yet been completed).
3. NCP resides in another State and interstate referral is or should be completed.
4. NCP paying for a minimum of three consecutive months.

Because staff teams are now assigned to a specific category of cases, they can develop specialized expertise related to that type of case. For example, a person assigned to Category Three can become an expert on interstate case processing while Category One staff focus on locate processes. The specialization leads to more efficient handling of work as well as improved performance.

Time Frame:

This new approach was piloted in four of Missouri's child support offices for six months between January and June 2006. Statewide implementation began in October 2006 and was completed in December 2006.

Results:

Pilot results showed an average 10 percent increase overall in enforcement actions taken and a 7 percent increase in cases meeting the criteria for, and moving to, Category Four.

In the first six months of statewide implementation, as compared to the previous six months, **enforcement actions increased by approximately 14 percent.** Category Four cases increased by 2 percent between January and May 2007 while **cases paying towards arrears increased by 9 percent.**

Costs:

Missouri estimates that about 2000 hours of programming were required to make the required system changes. These changes included identifying triggers from known information in the system (such as employment, address, interstate referral) to "move" the case to the appropriate category. Also, on certain screens in their automated system, there is a category field which displays the category that the case is in.

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