



**COLORADO**  
Child Support Services  
Department of Human Services

# Colorado Improved Payments and Child Success (IMPACS)

EVALUATION OF EARLY PROGRAM  
IMPLEMENTATION AND OUTCOMES

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# Contents

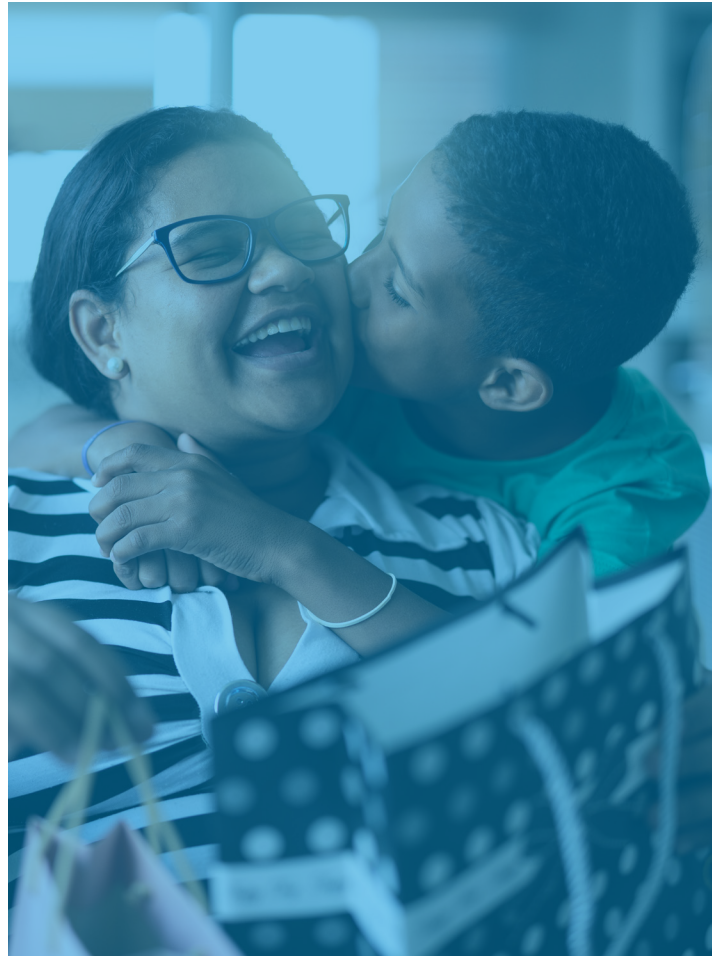
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<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
NCP Employment Programs.....	5
IMPACS Launch .....	6
IMPACS Service Providers .....	7
<i>Discover Goodwill</i> .....	8
<i>Hilltop Family Resource Center</i> .....	8
<i>Employment Services of Weld County</i> .....	9
Evaluation Scope.....	9
<i>Data Collection</i> .....	9
<b>Clients Referred to IMPACS</b> .....	<b>12</b>
Child Support Obligations .....	13
<b>Characteristics of IMPACS Clients</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Demographics .....	14
Family Relationships .....	15
Parent Engagement, Parenting Time Agreements, and Co-Parenting Relationships .....	16
Evaluation Scales .....	19
<i>Barriers Scale Pre-Test and Challenges IMPACS Clients Face</i> .....	19
<i>Co-Parenting Scale Pre-Test and Challenges IMPACS Clients Face</i> .....	20
<i>Child-Parent Relationship Scale Pre-Test and Challenges IMPACS Clients Face</i> .....	20
<b>Description of Services</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<i>Financial Support</i> .....	24
<b>Reactions to Program</b> .....	<b>26</b>
Client Focus Group Overview .....	26
Child Support Partners .....	27
<b>Outcomes</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Barriers and Child-Parent Relationship Scales.....	29
Milestones.....	30
Child Support Payments .....	31
<b>Portraits of Success</b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>35</b>
Recommendations .....	37

# Executive Summary

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Colorado's Improved Payments and Child Success (IMPACS) program is an employment and case management program for noncustodial parents (NCPs) facing difficulty meeting their child support obligations. **The creation of the IMPACS program is a continuation of the Division of Child Support Services' (DCSS) ongoing efforts to incorporate a multigenerational framework, or two-generation approach (2Gen), to address barriers to self-sufficiency experienced by each member of the family.** IMPACS is funded through Temporary Assistance for Needy Family (TANF) resources, as allocated by the state legislature. This report describes the initial implementation and outcomes of IMPACS services during the period of March 2021 through April 2023.



The IMPACS program has three goals:

- Increasing the percentage of child support cases that receive payment
- Improving employment outcomes
- Enhancing parent child relationships

IMPACS is administered by DCSS and provides funds to Colorado county Human Services departments or nonprofits that collaborate with child support agencies to serve parents who would benefit from assistance with employment. **Three agencies were selected for the first round of IMPACS implementation:**

- **Discover Goodwill, serving Denver and Jefferson counties**
- **Hilltop Family Resource Center, serving Montrose and Delta counties**
- **Employment Services of Weld County**

## KEY FINDINGS

1. During the first two years of implementation 319 individuals were referred to IMPACS from five county child support agencies and 210 of these individuals engaged in services. As expected, it was somewhat difficult to engage eligible clients in services, and once engaged, the clients' substantial barriers to self-sufficiency demanded attention and focus from service providers.
2. Strong, effective, and positive partnerships between service providers and child support agencies were key to effective implementation and meeting the needs of clients
3. Ten percent (22) of IMPACS clients "graduated" from services during the study period. Graduates of IMPACS services had positive employment and child support payment outcomes. **The average amount of payments doe IMPACS graduates in the six months after referral to IMPACS increased by \$596.92, representing 54% more than the amount paid prior to referral.**

4. IMPACS graduates reported significant decreases in the number and severity of barriers faced as a result of their participation in IMPACS.
5. Forty-four percent of IMPACS clients secured better or new employment.
6. Average client engagement with services was six months, with positive milestones typically observed beginning in month four, after basic needs issues were addressed.
7. Overall the amount of child support payments made in the six months prior to referral and the six months after referral did not change for IMPACS clients.
8. IMPACS clients in relationship with their child, with a neutral or positive relationship with the co-parent, and those with a parenting time agreement had better payment patterns than other clients.
9. Financial and in-kind support provided assistance with employment related expenses like training, transportation, and work clothing, as well as basic needs, including food and housing assistance.
10. The individualized and non-judgemental support provided by IMPACS staff from all three organizations was greatly appreciated by clients.

*They're so understanding, and it's on my time. Because through all of what I was going through, like being sick, being pregnant, being put in the hospital, through all of that. . . we were able to work around it or work with it. And I didn't get just cut off or thrown out of the program. It was like, "what can we do to help you succeed?"* – **EMPLOYMENT SERVICES CLIENT**

11. IMPACS services are most effective when coupled with 2Gen services provided by child support agencies.

## **Child Support's Two Generation (2Gen) Approach and Services Improves Outcomes**

Two of the five counties engaged with IMPACS made referrals through an internal child support 2Gen program. Denver's Parenthood program and Montrose's Parent Coach worked closely with IMPACS programs to refer clients likely to engage in services and then jointly coordinated services and communication with clients. The result was more active engagement and better outcomes for clients:

- The rate of service uptake from clients from the 2Gen counties was 78%, compared to 53% at other counties.
- IMPACS clients from 2Gen counties demonstrated a significantly larger decrease in overall barriers at graduation than clients from other counties.
- The average number of hours served and supportive service funds distributed was slightly less for clients from 2Gen counties than those from other counties.
- IMPACS clients from 2Gen counties made an average of \$529 more in child support payments during the six months after referral than did clients from other counties.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The IMPACS program was launched during the worst of the COVID 19 pandemic, but in spite of this, services were initiated by the three service providers and clients engaged in services and experienced positive outcomes. Much can be learned from this first implementation of the IMPACS program to enhance outcomes in the future. IMPACS would benefit from implementing the following strategies:

1. Diversify enrollment strategies to enroll more clients, including conducting direct outreach to eligible clients through parenting services, flyers, and written communication.
2. Encourage child support agencies to implement internal 2Gen services as a complement to IMPACS services. The outcomes for both 2Gen services and IMPACS will improve if services are provided in tandem.
3. Continue the strong collaboration between child support agencies and IMPACS programs. Work with child support agencies to consistently leverage child support incentives with participation in IMPACS, such as reinstatement of driver's licenses or state-owed debt reduction.
4. Enhance the consistent use of motivational interviewing and other case management strategies to address the challenges of effectively engaging clients.
5. Continue to provide indirect financial support to assist clients with the basic needs stabilization necessary prior to gaining meaningful employment and improving child support payments.
6. Expand service providers capacity to address parent-child engagement, including collaboration with parenting plan services.
7. Recognize and plan for clients' needs for several months of service in order to achieve



## **NCP Employment Programs**

Child support is a powerful economic tool for low-income families. Researchers estimate that child support removes approximately one million people from poverty (Sorensen, 2010; Wheaton & Tashi, 2008) and that next to mothers' earnings, it is the second largest income source for poor families. It comprises 30 percent of total family income among families below poverty and 15 percent for families between 100 and 200 percent of poverty (Turetsky, 2005). Child support payment is also associated with positive child well-being outcomes (Knox & Bane, 1994) including gains in children's academic achievement and declines in behavioral problems (Koball & Principe, 2002).

Despite its potential, child support frequently goes unpaid. In 2018, a U.S. Census survey reported that only 42 percent of parents received all the support they were due (Sorensen, 2021). An estimated 70 percent of unpaid back support is owed by NCPs (nearly all of whom are fathers) with no reported income or reported incomes below \$10,000 per year (Sorensen, Sousa, & Schaner, 2007).

For these reasons, child support agencies need to go beyond traditional enforcement activities and collaborate with employment programs to address the array of needs that many low-income NCPs have in a more comprehensive manner. These types of services are not allowable expenditures in the normal course of IV-D child support operations, but the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) has offered funding through 1115 Demonstration grants, waivers, and incentive funds to support employment programs. In addition, it is possible to use TANF funds for employment programs for TANF-eligible clients. OCSS estimates that 32 states and D.C. had NCP Employment Programs in at least some jurisdictions in 2019 (OCSS, 2021).

Colorado's experience with NCP Employment Programs began with Arapahoe County's Parents to Work! program, launched in 2008. In 2012, DCSS was awarded funds to participate in the national OCSS parent employment program, the Child Support Non-Custodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED). DCSS' implementation of CSPED was known as the Colorado Parent Employment Program (Co-Pep), with participation from five counties.

The implementation of the CSPED grant coincided with important changes at DCSS. In 2013, DCSS underwent a name change from Child Support Enforcement to Child Support Services. Along with this shift in name, a shift in perspective and priorities took place. DCSS began a transformation in agency culture towards a family-centered approach by exploring how to provide child support services across multiple generations within a two-generation framework (2Gen) to combating multi-generational poverty. The hallmark of the 2Gen approach is the idea that the agency will address barriers to self-sufficiency experienced by each member of the family, both parents and child(ren), through enhanced child support services.

In 2018, DCSS embarked on a pilot project to develop and test the implementation of a 2Gen model within 11 county child support programs. Participating counties were given resources to integrate a 2Gen approach into child support services, and their experience provided valuable insight into the process required for successful integration. The pilot project did not, however, demonstrate impact on engaged noncustodial parent's child support payment patterns.

In response, DCSS created the IMPACS program to address NCP's income barriers in meeting child support obligations by providing employment services. IMPACS is funded by TANF funds, as allocated by the state legislature. The first allocation was for the 2019-20 fiscal year, extending through the 2022-23 fiscal year. A second three-year allocation of funds was awarded by the legislature in 2023.

## **IMPACS Launch**

DCSS solicited potential IMPACS service providers through a Request for Application (RFA) in June 2020. The RFA included this description:

### *IMPACS Program Guiding Principles*

Parents paying child support and their families participating in the IMPACS Program will be offered a full array of opportunities and supports to overcome and minimize barriers to employment, including individualized case management and other supportive services, as necessary. An important and integral focus of the Colorado Division of Child Support Services Program is to incorporate a two-generation (2Gen) model into the day-to-day functions of the child support program. This model is guiding the Program's effort to align and coordinate supportive services to meet the needs of all family members.

The RFA articulated three desired outcomes for IMPACS services:

**GOAL 1:** Increase the percentage of child support cases receiving payment

**GOAL 2:** Improve employment outcomes (i.e., employment attainment, wages, and retention)

**GOAL 3:** Improve parent-child relationships

Eligible applicants included County Departments of Human Services or nonprofit organizations with a demonstrated history of employment services and a documented commitment for collaboration with its corresponding County Human Services and/or Employment services. Like many new programs, the launch of IMPACS services was challenging, made much more so by the circumstances created by the pandemic. Three service providers were selected to implement IMPACS, with contract negotiations and finalization occurring in early 2021. The IMPACS service providers received their first referrals from their partner child support agencies in March 2021.

The IMPACS service providers selected to implement the inaugural IMPACS services were:

- **Discover Goodwill**, serving Denver and Jefferson counties
- **Hilltop Family Resource Center**, serving Montrose and Delta counties
- **Employment Services of Weld County**

Discover Goodwill and Hilltop Family Resource Center are both nonprofit human service organizations, while Employment Services of Weld County is the county's workforce center. While eligible for consideration, no county child support agencies applied to serve as an IMPACS provider in this first round of applications. DCSS contracted with the Center for Policy Research (CPR) to provide technical assistance and evaluation services to the project.

Early implementation efforts included service providers establishing and building cooperative relationships with the IMPACS service providers' corresponding child support agencies and the CPR's development of an IMPACS management information system as a data collection tool for program monitoring and evaluation. Within the broad framework of offering employment and supportive services to NCPs, each program had discretion to design and implement services aligned with their organizational missions.

## **IMPACS Service Providers**

The IMPACS service providers vary in organizational structure, areas of focus, and expertise.

Discover Goodwill, commonly known for its thrift stores, offers a full suite of employment opportunities, services, and training for various populations, including those with economic challenges. Hilltop Family Resource Center provides parenting support and education, along with a wide array of other human services. Employment Services of Weld County provides comprehensive employment and education services. The IMPACS programs are located in different geographic areas, with one provider serving a rural area, another serving the most populated metro area in Colorado, and another serving a county with both urban and rural populations.

## Discover Goodwill



**Goodwill**  
of  
**COLORADO**

Discover Goodwill of Colorado (Goodwill) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides several employment and antipoverty programs for individuals, families, and businesses statewide, in the Denver Metro area, and in the Colorado Springs/Pikes Peak area. In 2022 alone, Goodwill served 127,287 individuals through its job placement and education and training programs (Goodwill of Colorado, 2023).

Goodwill has especially robust employment programming in the Denver Metro area, which has supported the implementation of the IMPACS program since its inception in March 2021. Goodwill has three full-time staff members dedicated to the delivery and oversight of IMPACS services, with two direct service providers and one supervisor. One Goodwill staff person had the role of job developer, identifying and quickly placing IMPACS clients at jobs.

At the beginning of the IMPACS program, Goodwill worked exclusively with Denver County Child Support. In January 2023, an additional partnership was formed with Jefferson County Child Support. These counties are two of five that comprise the greater Denver Metro area; Denver County is Colorado's most populous, with 713,252 residents as of July 2022, and Jefferson County has an estimated population of 576,143 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). Between March 2021 and April 2023, Goodwill received 100 referrals from Denver County, and between January and April 2023, Jefferson County made 32 referrals to Goodwill. IMPACS staff meet biweekly with both Denver County and Jefferson County Child Support staff to discuss referrals and active participants. Conversations at these meetings regularly cover participant engagement with IMPACS, strategies for breaking down barriers to employment and parenting, and next steps for service delivery. In spring 2023, Denver Child Support had 17,191 open cases, and Jefferson Child Support had 10,031 open cases.

Referrals from Denver Child Support were facilitated through its internal Parenthood program, a 2Gen service that helps clients overcome barriers. Case managers in the Parenthood program have a reduced caseload and work to link to clients to needed resources in the community.

## Hilltop Family Resource Center



Hilltop Family Resource Center (Hilltop) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides an array of services to families and individuals in Western Colorado, with physical locations in Grand Junction and Montrose. In addition to the IMPACS program, Hilltop offers parenting and life skills courses, food assistance, High Fidelity Wraparound case management, and other services designed to strengthen family well-being (Hilltop Family Resource Center, 2023). Hilltop has provided services to NCPs through the IMPACS program since March 2021, with one full-time staff member dedicated to program delivery and oversight.

Of the three IMPACS service providers, Hilltop is the only family resource center and, therefore, the only service provider with existing parenting and supportive programming within the organization. IMPACS participants have had the opportunity to access multiple Hilltop services at once, such as fatherhood and parenting classes, allowing for a holistic experience in addressing many barriers faced. The IMPACS staff are trained in Motivational Interviewing, described as “a collaborative, goal-oriented style of communication with particular attention to the language of change.” It is designed to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person's own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion” (Miller & Rollnick, 2013, p. 29). IMPACS operates out of Hilltop's Montrose location and receives referrals from Montrose and Delta counties. The IMPACS program staff meet weekly with staff from Montrose

Child Support to discuss referrals and the progress of active program participants. These regular meetings allow access to updated information for both parties and for continuity of services between agencies. The IMPACS staff also regularly attend court hearings to solicit referrals in real time. This strategy has proven effective in limiting the barriers of the referral process and engaging participants who would otherwise struggle to attend an intake appointment.

As a family resource center, Hilltop has centered its services on comprehensive case management and focused efforts on helping clients overcome basic-needs barriers. Between March 2021 and April 2023, Hilltop received 81 referrals: 64 from Montrose County Child Support and 17 from Delta County Child Support. Both Montrose and Delta are rural counties with relatively small child support caseloads (Delta with 859, Montrose with 1,563<sup>1</sup>). Both counties have high rates of poverty, exceeding the statewide average. Montrose's population is estimated at 43,811, with 12.5 percent living in poverty; Delta county's population is estimated to be 31,602, with 13.9 percent living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

Montrose Child Support participated in the 2Gen Transformation Project and has continued to house a parent coach that offers supplemental services to clients. All referrals to IMPACS from Montrose were made through the parent coach, who does not maintain a regular child support caseload, but instead focuses on providing 2Gen services.

## Employment Services of Weld County



Employment Services of Weld County (Employment Services) is a workforce center that is housed within the Weld County Department of Human Services. Employment Services specializes in employment, education, and training resources and is a partner of the American Job Center Network (Weld County, 2023). Of the three IMPACS service providers, Employment Services is the only government-operated entity, differentiating it from the other two nonprofit organizations in its capacity to refer directly to programming such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program. Employment Services started with two part-time staff dedicated to IMPACS program implementation, but then streamlined to a single full-time staff person to limit the number of times a participant transferred between service providers.

Employment Services received IMPACS referrals exclusively from Weld County Child Support, which, conveniently, is located in the same building. Weld is a midsized rural and urban county with an estimated population of 350,176 as of July 2022, and with 9.8 percent of the population living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). From March 2021 through April 2023, 104 referrals were received from Weld child support. Employment Services IMPACS staff and Weld County Child Support staff meet on a biweekly basis to discuss referrals and the progress of active participants. In spring 2023, Weld Child Support had 7,237 open cases.

## Evaluation Scope

CPR was engaged at the beginning of IMPACS implementation and participated in onboarding service providers, including providing training and technical assistance specific to employment programs for NCPs and developing referral and intake tools and a management information system for data collection.

<sup>1</sup>Caseloads as of June 2023.

## Data Collection

This report draws on four data sources:

- IMPACS Management Information System
- Three evaluation scales to measure barriers, child-parent relationships, and co-parent relationships
- DCSS Case and Payment Administrative Data for individuals referred to IMPACS programs
- Program observations and feedback generated from multiple focus groups and with clients, service provider staff, and child support staff

## MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

CPR worked with software development company Neon One to create an online, secure management information system (MIS) to serve both as a case management tool for the sites and as a data collection platform for program and outcome monitoring. IMPACS staff were required to record all program records within the MIS. CPR monitored the data, prepared reports, and met with sites monthly to discuss program implementation and data collection issues. The reports also served as progress reports for DCSS.

The MIS collected data on the characteristics and experiences of clients served, the types and intensity of services and resources provided, and the milestones clients achieved. While the service provider staff were responsive to requirements for data collection, there were variations in the degree of detail and data entry practices from agency to agency. Even with this caveat, the data compiled in the MIS provides useful information on the clients' experience with IMPACS services.

## CHILD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATIVE DATA EXTRACT

DCSS provided an extract from administrative records on case information and child support payments for individuals referred to IMPACS. Payment records spanned eight months prior to the start of IMPACS (August 2020) to the close of data collection on April 30, 2023. The child support payment records of those individuals who were referred to IMPACS but did not engage in services served as a convenience sample for comparison to clients served.

## FOCUS GROUPS

CPR staff met with past and present IMPACS participants at all three sites to collect information about their experience in the program, the barriers they faced coming into the program, and the ways in which the program could be improved.

CPR staff met in person with participants of the Hilltop IMPACS program at their Montrose location and with Goodwill IMPACS participants at their Denver location. There were four and seven participants in each group, respectively. CPR met with three Weld participants virtually on Zoom, by request. All three focus groups were recorded, transcribed into written transcripts, and coded for significant themes. Client quotes from the focus group are shared throughout this report, providing a stark view of clients' experiences and views.

CPR also conducted separate focus groups with the service provider staff and with staff from the partner child support agencies.

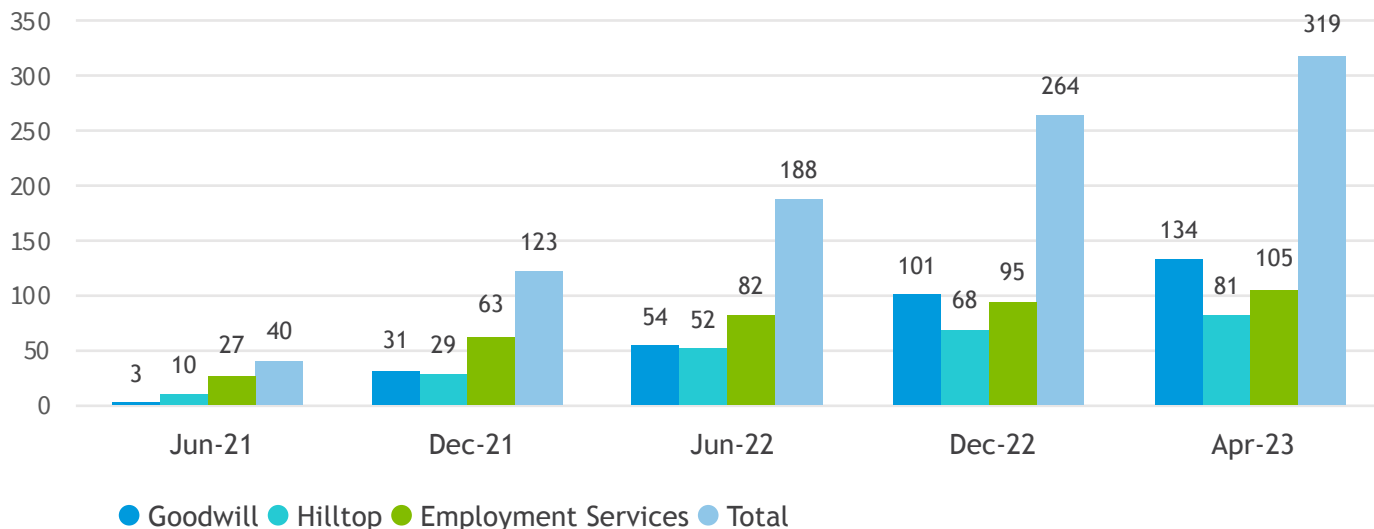
## LIMITATIONS

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of IMPACS services in multiple ways. IMPACS launched when infections rates were high and many people were contracting COVID. When vaccinations became readily available in mid-April, the rates of new cases averaged 1,110 per day. The statewide peak of 13,587 daily cases occurred in January 2022, ten months after IMPACS launched (The New York Times, 2023).

IMPACS services were launched remotely, while COVID-related unemployment and job losses remained high. The ability to meet child support obligations was augmented for individuals who qualified for COVID-related unemployment benefits, but very few of those served by IMPACS—only 7 percent—reported they were accessing unemployment benefits.

The challenges posed by COVID-19 amplified the normal challenges of launching a new program like IMPACS. It took ten months for the cumulative referrals across all three IMPACS providers to surpass 100, and the number of those engaged in services did not reach 100 until May of 2022—14 months after IMPACS began. This pace of referrals and client engagement was much slower than anticipated.

**Figure 1. Cumulative referrals at five points in time from June 2021 to April 2023.**



The slow pace of referrals and service engagement limits both the overall sample size and the period available for analysis for this evaluation. As a result, analysis of extracts of child support and employment data have limited value. A small extract of child support administrative data was acquired and analyzed for this report, but it was not possible to examine employment data, as originally planned. As a result, this report relies heavily on the data collected internally through the MIS and is largely descriptive about the nature of services and the clients served.



# Clients Referred to IMPACS

Child support agencies directly referred clients to the IMPACS program, aiming to identify NCPs who were willing to pay their child support order but unable to do so due to a lack of employment and other significant barriers. Basic eligibility requirements included having an active IV-D child support case, a yearly household income of under \$75,000, and the ability to work. Additionally, the client could not be actively involved in a dependency and neglect case through child welfare. Each site developed an individualized approach to follow up on referrals after child support staff identified the potential participants.

*She [IMPACS staff] kept calling and calling . . . And I just denied and denied. And suddenly, I was like, man, she sent me another text. And I tried to sober up and I started talking to her.*

— GOODWILL CLIENT

The IMPACS program received a total of 319 referrals, and referral practices varied among child support agencies. Weld County Child Support Services made the earliest referrals, equal to more than twice the number of referrals made from other counties during 2021. Eventually, Weld narrowed its referral practices, attempting to identify clients more likely to engage in active services.

Engagement with IMPACS was offered to clients as a strategy to address nonpayment of child support obligations. While many of the referred clients faced actual or potential enforcement actions such as suspension of driver’s or other licenses, participation in IMPACS was largely voluntary. In a few cases, clients were court-ordered to enroll in IMPACS due to nonpayment of child support obligations. Child support agencies had the option of offering child support incentives for participation, such as a stay on driver’s license suspension or a reduction in state-owed arrears. Weld County offered a \$100 reduction in state-owed arrears for those who participated in an IMPACS intake session. Other incentives included bus passes or transportation vouchers.

While some of those referred chose not to participate in services, 66 percent did engage in services. As is common among similar programs, it was somewhat difficult for the IMPACS providers to engage clients in services. Often, the IMPACS staff made repeated contact attempts before securing a commitment from a client to participate and scheduling an intake session.

**Table 1. IMPACS Referrals and Service Engagement**

IMPACS Service Provider	# of Referrals	# of Clients Engaged in Services (n=319)	Rate of Referrals to Service Engagement	Clients in Service on 4/30/23 (n=319)
Goodwill—Denver	100	79	79%	60
Goodwill—Jefferson	32	15	47%	12
Goodwill—Other	1	0	0%	
<b>Goodwill Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>72</b>
Hilltop—Delta	17	13	76%	
Hilltop—Montrose	64	49	77%	
<b>Hilltop Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>43</b>
Employment Services—Weld	103	54	51%	18
Employment Services—Other	1	0	0%	
<b>Employment Services Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>133</b>

## Child Support Obligations

As part of the referral process, child support staff provided information on the individual’s monthly child support obligation and arrears owed. Table 2 illustrates the obligations of referred clients and compares the amounts across counties and programs and for those who did and did not engage in services. The average monthly obligations and arrears owed were comparable for those who engaged in services and those who did not. While there are some variations in amounts owed from county to county, the differences were not significant.

**Table 2. Child Support Obligations for Those Referred and Those Who Engaged in Services**

IMPACS Service Provider	Average Monthly Obligation			Average Arrears		
	Engaged in Services (n=210)	Referral Only (n=119)	All Referrals (n=319)	Engaged in Services (n=210)	Referral Only (n=119)	All Referrals (n=319)
Goodwill—Jefferson	\$672	\$410	\$523	\$15,748	\$16,889	\$16,019
Goodwill—Other		\$245	\$245		\$17,195	\$17,195
<b>Goodwill Average</b>	<b>\$415</b>	<b>\$360</b>	<b>\$397</b>	<b>\$13,785</b>	<b>\$12,603</b>	<b>\$13,378</b>
Hilltop—Delta	\$352	\$290	\$337	\$9,272	\$7,620	\$8,883
Hilltop—Montrose	\$600	\$405	\$554	\$11,958	\$8,398	\$11,124
<b>Hilltop Average</b>	<b>\$548</b>	<b>\$381</b>	<b>\$509</b>	<b>\$11,395</b>	<b>\$8,235</b>	<b>\$10,653</b>
Employment Services—Weld	\$418	\$527	\$470	\$14,473	\$12,458	\$13,404
Employment Services—Other		\$602	\$602		\$568	\$568
<b>Employment Services Average</b>	<b>\$418</b>	<b>\$527</b>	<b>\$471</b>	<b>\$14,473</b>	<b>\$12,225</b>	<b>\$13,381</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$455</b>	<b>\$443</b>	<b>\$450</b>	<b>\$13,257</b>	<b>\$11,665</b>	<b>\$12,690</b>



# Characteristics of IMPACS Clients

## Demographics

Across all three IMPACS programs, the clients served reported that they were largely in their late 30s and were of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. Forty percent of IMPACS clients were white, and a third were Latinx. Goodwill served more African Americans than other service providers, particularly in Denver, where African Americans made up 40 percent of the clients served.

**Table 3. IMPACS Client Demographics**

IMPACS Service Provider	Average Age (n=188)	Ethnicity (n=194)					
		African American	American Indian	Latinx	White	Other	Prefer Not to Answer
Goodwill—Denver (n=73)	39	40%	0%	33%	12%	7%	8%
Goodwill—Jefferson (n=13)	40	0%	0%	23%	69%	8%	0%
<b>Goodwill Average (n=86)</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>7%</b>
Hilltop—Delta (n=13)	37	0%	0%	15%	85%		
Hilltop—Montrose (n=48)	37	2%		38%	58%		2%
<b>Hilltop Average (n=61)</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>2%</b>		<b>33%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Employment Services—Weld (n=47)	40	2%	9%	21%	43%	19%	6%
<b>Total Average (n=194)</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>

Almost a quarter of clients reported they had earned less than a GED or high school degree. Another 34 percent had graduated from high school or earned a GED. While 40 percent indicated they had received some college education, only 2 percent had secured a bachelor’s degree or higher education.

**Table 4. Education**

IMPACS Service Provider	No Degree	GED	High School	Some College	Associate’s Degree	Bachelor’s or Higher
Goodwill—Denver	20%	20%	22%	26%	5%	7%
Goodwill—Jefferson	21%	21%	21%	29%	7%	0%
<b>Goodwill Average</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Hilltop—Delta	25%	8%	25%	42%	0%	0%
Hilltop—Montrose	23%	17%	17%	36%	4%	2%
<b>Hilltop Average</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Employment Services	29%	27%	8%	27%	8%	2%
<b>Average</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>

IMPACS clients were asked to estimate their annual earnings. Most clients reported very low income levels, with 92 percent reporting annual earnings of \$40,000 or less and 43 percent reporting earnings of \$10,000 or less. In Colorado, a family with four children with an income of \$43,925 or less is at 125 percent of the federal poverty level, which suggests IMPACS clients were largely living in extreme poverty.

**Table 5. Earnings**

IMPACS Service Provider	\$0	\$1-\$10,000	\$10,001-\$20,000	\$20,001-\$30,000	\$30,001-\$40,000	\$40,001-\$50,000	over \$50,000
Goodwill—Denver	5.3%	32.0%	16.0%	24.0%	12.0%	5.3%	5.3%
Goodwill—Jefferson	0.0%	23.1%	23.1%	30.8%	0.0%	7.7%	15.4%
<b>Goodwill Total</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>30.7%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	<b>25.0%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
Hilltop—Delta	0%	46.2%	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%	7.7%	0.0%
Hilltop—Montrose	6.4%	36.2%	25.5%	14.9%	12.8%	4.3%	0.0%
<b>Hilltop Total</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>23.3%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Employment Services</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>49.0%</b>	<b>16.3%</b>	<b>14.3%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>6.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>37.6%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>

## Family Relationships

Seventy-five percent of IMPACS clients were fathers. The percentage of clients who were mothers (25%) is higher than the percentage reported in other evaluations of NCP employment programs; for example, the CSPED project reported that only 10 percent of clients were mothers (Institute for Research on Poverty, 2018). Parents had an average of two children on the child support case that prompted the IMPACS referral, plus an additional two children not covered by that child support order.

**Table 6. Children**

IMPACS service provider	Relationship to Child		Number of Children		
	Mother	Father	# Children on Referred Case	# Other Children	Total # Children
Goodwill Average	21%	79%	1.7	2.1	3.8
Hilltop Average	28%	72%	1.9	1.9	3.8
Employment Services Average	27%	73%	1.5	3	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>4</b>



## Parent Engagement, Parenting Time Agreements, and Co-Parenting Relationships

IMPACS clients were asked to describe their relationship and interaction with their youngest child who was over two years old and included in the child support case. The youngest child and minimum age were designated to facilitate consistency in responses. **Most parents (75%) indicated they had a relationship with this child, but a quarter of the parents reported not having a relationship. Close to half reported interacting with their child at least once a week, but 27 percent stated they never see the child.** Fifty-two percent of parents indicated they were satisfied with the relationship with the child at least sometimes, but 48 percent said they were not satisfied.

**Table 7. Relationship with Youngest Child**

IMPACS Service Provider	Relationship with Youngest Child		Never	Frequency of Seeing Child			Satisfied with Relationship with Child		
	Yes	No		At Least a Few Times a Year	At Least Once Most Months	Daily-Weekly	Yes	Some-times	No
Goodwill	70%	30%	27%	6%	17%	51%	45%	7%	48%
Hilltop	83%	17%	26%	10%	15%	49%	30%	17%	53%
Employment Services	72%	28%	30%	14%	9%	46%	51%	6%	43%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>48%</b>

**Seventy-one percent of IMPACS clients were never married to the other parent of the child(ren) in the child support case.** For unmarried parents, child support is often set without a corresponding parenting time agreement, which is an important component to parent engagement. The process for establishing a parenting time agreement is separate from establishing child support. A parenting time agreement outlines the time that the child will spend with each parent, and in the absence of a plan, nonresident parents have no defined access to their children, except as informally arranged with the other parent. IMPACS clients were asked if they had a parenting time agreement with the other parent. While **62 percent indicated that they had either an informal or legal agreement with the other parent, 38 percent of clients had no agreement.**

Table 8 illustrates the relationship between the presence of a parenting time agreement and IMPACS clients' engagement with their child. Those without a parenting time agreement were significantly less likely to have a relationship with their child, saw their child less frequently, and were less likely to be satisfied with the relationship with their child than those with a formal or informal agreement. IMPACS clients' experiences demonstrate the impact on nonresident parent engagement when a parenting time agreement has not been created.

**Table 8. Frequency of Interaction and Relationships with Child by Type of Parenting Time Agreement**

Type of Agreement	%	Relationship with Child?		Never	Frequency of Seeing Child			Satisfied with Relationship?		
		No	Yes		At Least a Few Times a Year	At Least Once Most Months	Weekly-Daily	No	Some-times	Yes
<b>*No Agreement</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Informal Agreement	17%	6%	94%	3%	6%	21%	70%	32%	9%	59%
Legal Agreement	45%	17%	83%	19%	8%	10%	63%	39%	14%	48%

\*p<.001

Parenting time agreements and the presence of a relationship with the youngest child were examined relative to total child support payments made by IMPACS clients in the six months prior to referral to the program. While the results are not statistically significant, higher amounts of child support were paid by those with a parenting time agreement and a relationship with the child. The data suggests there is an intersection between higher parent engagement and child support payments. See Tables 9 and 10.

**Table 9. Parenting Time Agreements and Child Support Payments**

Type of Agreement	Mean Amount of Child Support Paid Six Months Prior to IMPACS Referral (n=139)
No Agreement	\$667.86
Informal Agreement	\$816.10
Legal Agreement	\$1343.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$982.18</b>

**Table 10. Relationship with Child and Child Support Payments**

Do You Have a Relationship with Your Youngest Child?	Mean Amount of Child Support Paid Six months Prior to IMPACS Referral (n=139)
Yes	\$1042.94
No	\$886.48
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$982.18</b>

Parents were asked about the nature of their relationship with the other parent, or co-parent. **Forty-four percent indicated they got along “okay” or “pretty well,” while 56 percent stated they did not get along well or had no relationship with the other parent.** Table 11 compares the relationship with the co-parent with the presence of a relationship with the IMPACS client’s child(ren). **Among those who indicate they do not have a relationship with their child, 50 percent also do not have a relationship with the co-parent. Conversely, among those who do have a relationship with their child, 55 percent characterize how they get along with the other co-parent as “Okay or pretty well.”**

**Table 11. Co-Parenting Relationship and Relationship to Youngest Child**

How Well Do You Get Along with the Other Parent?	Do You Have a Relationship with your Youngest Child? (n=189)		Total
	No	Yes	
No Relationship	50%	14%	24%
Not Well	38%	30%	32%
Okay/Pretty Well	13%	55%	44%

The nature of the co-parenting relationship and the presence of a parenting plan agreement between the co-parents were examined. **Among those without a parenting agreement, 64 percent report they have no relationship or do not get along well with the other parent. Conversely among those with an informal or formal parenting agreement, 50 percent indicated they get along “okay” or “pretty well” with the other parent.** Together, this data illustrates how the nature of the co-parenting relationship intersects with the nonresident parents’ engagement with the child and indicates that the presence of a parenting plan agreement is more common among those with a more positive relationship with the co-parent.

**Table 12. Co-Parent Relationship and Parenting Time Agreements**

Type of Agreement	How Well Do You Get Along with the Other Parent?		
	No Relationship	Not Well	Okay/Pretty Well
No Agreement (n=74)	42%	22%	37%
Informal or Verbal Agreement (n=31)	13%	27%	61%
Legal Agreement (n=88)	13%	42%	46%
<b>Total (n=193)</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>13</b>

The co-parenting relationship likely also has influence on the frequency of the NCP’s interaction with the child(ren). Table 13 illustrates that 54 percent of those with no relationship with the other parent never see their child(ren), while 60 percent of those who report they get along okay or pretty report seeing their children weekly or daily.

**Table 13. Relationship with Co-Parent and Frequency of Interacting with Child**

Frequency of Seeing Child	How Well Do You Get Along with the Other Parent?		
	No Relationship	Not Well	Okay/Pretty Well
Never	54%	33%	14%
At Least a Few Times a Year	29%	29%	41%
At Least Once Most Months	7%	44%	48%
Weekly-Daily	11%	29%	60%

The relationship between a parent’s ability to meet their child support obligations and their ability to see their children is sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented. The right to see and spend time with a child is established through a parenting time plan, and in the absence thereof, NCPs’ access to their children is not guaranteed. Without a parenting time plan, the custodial parent has control over the NCP’s access and may deny access due to nonpayment of child support—or for any other reason. Even with a parenting plan, it is sometimes assumed that child support payments are linked to access to children, and nonpayment of child support limits access to children. Legally, this is not so, but it is the reality for many.

*Child support will tear you away from your children if you let it.*  
**– GOODWILL CLIENT**

The interconnectedness between child support payments, co-parenting relationships, parenting time agreements, and relationships between NCPs and their child(ren) are profoundly important and illustrated well by the experiences of most IMPACS clients. Those clients who indicated they get along “okay” or “pretty well” with their co-parent were more likely to have a relationship with their child; similarly, those with a parenting time agreement were more likely to have a relationship with their child.

IMPACS clients paid more child support when they had a relationship with their child—and when a parenting time agreement was in place.

In the brief *Promoting Child Well-Being & Family Self-Sufficiency: Child Support and Parenting Time: Improving Coordination to Benefit Children*, the Office of Child Support Enforcement shares that child well-being is improved by positive and consistent emotional and financial support from both parents, and “financial and emotional supports are interrelated: noncustodial fathers who are involved with their children are more likely to pay child support, and noncustodial parents who pay child support are more likely to stay involved in their children’s lives.” Information provided by IMPACS clients during their intake session on their relationships with their child and co-parent provides interesting data on the intersection of these factors. Coupled with information on child support payments during the study period, IMPACS clients’ experiences validate the interrelationships described above.

## Evaluation Scales

The IMPACS client intake process included administration of three evaluation assessments:

- Child-Parent Relationship Scale (Pianta, 1992)
- Co-Parent Relationship Scale (Dyer et al., 2015)
- Barriers Scale, adapted from the Fatherhood Research and Practice Network’s Measure of Fathers’ Challenges (Fagan & Kaufman)

The evaluation assessments were administered again upon clients’ completion of the IMPACS program, and the comparison of the pre- and post-assessments serve as a measure of outcomes related to parenting and overcoming barriers.

### Barriers Scale Pre-Test and Challenges IMPACS Clients Face

In addition to serving as a pre-post evaluation tool, the Barriers Scale provides valuable information illustrating the challenges faced by IMPACS clients. The Barriers Scale included 18 items and could range from 0-54. It reflected the degree to which clients faced a variety of challenges in meeting their daily needs and their child support and other financial obligations. A higher score indicates a greater number and intensity of barriers, and a lower score indicates fewer and/or a less intense experience of barriers. Scores ranged from 0-38. The most frequent score was 17, and the mean was 13.7. Since one of the questions asked about “other barriers” and very few participants indicated any additional barriers, a score of 17 could indicate that every barrier included in the scale was “a little bit” of a barrier on average. The items reported as barriers most frequently are illustrated in Table 14.

**Table 14. Top Barriers Reported by Clients**

Top Barriers	Goodwill (n=91)	Hilltop (n=56)	Employment Services (n=49)	Total (n=196)
Being unable to pay child support	93%*	79%	96%**	90%
Being unable to pay other bills	90%	80%	86%	86%
Having car problems or lack of transportation	62%	57%	57%	59%
Not having a driver’s license	44%	50%	53%	48%
Not having enough money for food	59%†	29%	47%	47%
Physical health problems	49%	32%	51%	45%
Not having a steady place to live	52%	36%	41%	44%
History of incarceration	38%	36%	59%*	43%

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; †p<.001 and difference is significant between Goodwill and Hilltop only.

The relatively high percentage of IMPACS clients who were mothers prompted an inquiry into the nature of their reported barriers and how they compared to barriers reported by fathers. There was no significant difference between mothers and fathers on overall Barriers Scale scores, but mothers did report significantly higher rates of barriers relative to being able to pay child support, having transportation problems, and being accused of neglecting or abusing their children.

**Table 15. Gender Differences in Barriers Reported**

Top Barriers	Father (n=143)	Mother (n=49)
Being unable to pay child support	88%	98%*
Having car problems or lack of transportation	54%	78%**
Being accused of neglecting or abusing children	13%	31%**

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01.

The barriers reported by clients were largely consistent across the service providers and sites. However, clients at Employment Services were significantly more likely to report a history of incarceration than the clients served by the other two providers, and clients at Hilltop Family Resource Center reported less difficulty making child support payments than clients at the other sites. Parents shared more information about the barriers they have experienced at the focus groups.

### **CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS, DEBT, AND ENFORCEMENT AS BARRIERS**

Though unsurprising for a program focused on helping NCPs meet their child support obligations, the most frequently reported barrier was the inability to make child support payments. The focus groups with clients provided many real-life examples of how overwhelmed IMPACS clients have felt and the severe consequences they have experienced because of their inability to pay child support.

*I'm trying to better myself. I'm paying all these child support from 2003 and I'm all the way to the top and they want more and I'm like, hey, you know what, I got more kids too that I have to take care of. God dang. – GOODWILL CLIENT*

*I can't survive. It's like, if my payments can't get lowered, any job that I get . . . I'll be working to pay child support only. I won't be able to live and survive. And then what's the point? – HILLTOP CLIENT*

*Everybody gets played with child support. Nobody gets what they want. Because for one, you're not getting a whole bunch of money from child support. My youngest daughter, her mom put me on child support. She gets \$56. That wasn't worth all this stuff that we have to go through for you to get \$56 . . . Now that the government is a part of your everyday program, it changes the things that you're capable and not capable of doing. – GOODWILL CLIENT*

Despite these challenges, several focus group members indicated that they want to meet their obligations:

*I feel like I'm getting closer to be able to pay full child support every month. I think as soon as I finish my exam, the national exam, then I'll be able to find a place work placement. So I'll be able to pay it. – EMPLOYMENT SERVICES CLIENT*

*I mean I know there's a lot of people out there that don't give two sh\*\*\* about their kids or making their child support payments. . . . I love my kids. And it's not that I don't want to pay for them, it's I can't pay that high of an amount . . . I won't be able to survive and take care of the two kids that I have at home. – HILLTOP CLIENT*

*That's it. Be a man, go to work. Pay your child support, you'll be fine. – GOODWILL CLIENT*

## Co-Parenting Scale Pre-Test and Challenges IMPACS Clients Face

In addition to the Barriers Scale, IMPACS clients were administered the Co-Parent Relationship Scale, which assesses the quality of NCPs' co-parenting relationships. The scale measures positive and negative co-parenting elements and has a range of 10-50, with 10 being the lowest possible score, indicating poor co-parenting, and 50 being the highest possible score, indicating positive co-parenting. The mean score for IMPACS clients was 27.4, indicating that **participants tended to have a more negative coparenting relationship**, and this was significantly lower than a “neutral” middle score of 30.

*With my situation, they've been trying to get a hold of my baby mom . . . She's got my daughter so brainwashed, she doesn't want nothing to do with me. – GOODWILL CLIENT*

More than half of respondents agreed that “the other parent undermines me as a parent” and disagreed that “the other parent and I make joint decisions about the children.” These results are consistent with the information gathered through the general intake questions described previously.

## Child-Parent Relationship Scale Pre-Test and Challenges IMPACS Clients Face

The final evaluation scale administered to parents was the Child-Parent Relationship Scale. Only parents who indicated that they had a relationship with their youngest child over two (designated for consistency in reporting purposes) were administered this assessment, which examines conflict and closeness between parents and their children. The conflict portion of the scale has a range of 7-35, with a higher score indicating more conflict in the relationship. IMPACS clients had a mean score of 12.5, which was significantly lower than a “neutral” relationship score of 21. This indicates that **parents generally experienced low levels of conflict with their children**.

*Their DNA is real . . . Your kids want to be with you. Whether the baby mamas play like they don't want to let them or try to poison them in their mind, your kids want to be with you, bro. They want to know their dad. It's just like you growing up as a person. You want to know who your people are. So do children. – GOODWILL CLIENT*

he closeness portion of the scale has a range of 6-30, with a higher score indicating more closeness in the relationship. Scores for IMPACS clients ranged from 6-30 with a mean of 26. This was significantly higher than a “neutral” score of 18, indicating that **parents generally experienced closeness in their relationships with their children**. Overall, those who had a relationship with their youngest child tended to have few conflicts with their children and a high degree of closeness.



# Description of Services

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Potential IMPACS clients were identified and referred through the participating child support agencies, with the process varying from county to county. In Denver and Montrose, IMPACS referrals were made through their specialized 2Gen services within the child support agency. Weld County made many referrals early on, but as time went on, workers focused on referring clients who were more likely to utilize services. Jefferson County joined Goodwill's services later than other counties, and multiple enforcement technicians made referrals with the intent that once engaged in services, the caseload of clients engaged in IMPACS would be consolidated to one child support case manager with a lower caseload than other technicians. In Delta County, referrals were made directly from child support, but the Hilltop IMPACS case manager also attended regular child support court hearings and recruited clients at these hearings.

Once a referral was received, IMPACS staff reached out to the potential clients to schedule an intake session. The intake consisted of information gathering and administration of the pre-service evaluation scales. In addition, early service sessions focused on understanding the clients' needs, obstacles, and interests. As service progressed, efforts were made by the IMPACS service providers and clients to create plans to overcome barriers and secure employment. The three IMPACS providers approached services in ways aligned with their individual organizational missions.

*And right away, she started off, my first thing was the plan. Let's get these steps going.*

– GOODWILL CLIENT

**All the IMPACS service providers engaged in extensive collaboration and communication with their partner child support agencies.** This process evolved as IMPACS was implemented and included regular meetings (weekly or biweekly) with the IMPACS and child support staff. While the topics varied from site to site, the meetings generally included a client-by-client review of service uptake, engagement, and resources needed. If a client had not engaged in services, the child support staff would often follow up to encourage enrollment. Client-specific information was shared back and forth and options for resources and child support incentives were considered.

In the client focus groups, many individuals reported that the IMPACS staff helped them collaborate and communicate with child support:

*Now your license is in jeopardy because you might have missed a couple of phone calls. I call Kim. "Kim, they're tripping about my license. I just got another letter in the mail. What's happening?" She can make that immediate phone call. "Well, this is what you need to do." That's why we're getting our license back. Because the communication is instant compared to taking forever.* – GOODWILL CLIENT

The collaboration between the service providers and staff from the 2Gen child support programs (Denver and Montrose) was especially extensive. IMPACS clients in the focus groups often referred to the child support and IMPACS staff as a team:

*Between Jon and Paul, they're a really great team. Because whatever Paul doesn't know, the expert on child support is . . . Jon. Paul knows a lot, but Jon is the main guy to go to. If Paul can't answer questions, Jon sure can. But then Jon will tell you sometimes, I don't know. Ask Paul."*

– HILLTOP CLIENT

Participants across all sites described the different types of support and services they received from the program. Goodwill and Employment Services clients shared stories about developing employment plans, creating and updating resumes, and receiving information about job leads. At Employment Services, clients were able to access the comprehensive job search resources available at county job centers, and financial support was provided for assessment and training. Goodwill staff attended job fairs and reached out to individual employers to determine if jobs would be a good fit for clients, particularly those with criminal histories. While aiding clients’ basic needs, Goodwill also focused on rapid employment and helping clients find the resources needed to secure jobs quickly:

*“Kim is a beast at finding jobs. She’s a monster, man. She will get it done . . . [She] sits in that little bitty cubicle and makes miracles happen.” – GOODWILL CLIENT*

Many IMPACS clients came into services without secure housing and lacking basic resources. Once engaged, it was not uncommon for clients to experience a new crisis, and IMPACS staff, particularly at Hilltop, worked to provide and identify resources to address these issues. One client described how the Hilltop IMPACS staff helped when she ran out of propane for heat in the winter.

All the IMPACS sites helped clients with transportation, including bus fare and gas cards. At Employment Services, transportation support was primarily provided to entice participation, but at Goodwill and Hilltop, support ranged from securing a car from a car giveaway program to vouchers for rideshares and gas cards.

IMPACS service providers recorded the nature and quantity of services provided along four categories of service:

- **Case management** – general coaching, referrals, goal setting, and routine case coordination
- **Employment** – assessment, basic skills, workshops and other training, job search, and placement
- **Supportive Services** – crisis stabilization, health, basic needs, housing, transportation, and job readiness resources
- **Parenting** – co-parenting classes/coaching, mediation or parenting time agreement development, and parenting classes/coaching

A client was designated as engaging in service once they completed an intake. Overall, IMPACS service providers reported spending a mean of 19 hours with each client served. The largest overall mean number of hours was allocated to Case Management (8 hours), followed by Employment (7 hours) and Supportive Services (3 hours). The fewest mean hours were allocated to Parenting (1 hour).

Employment Services reported devoting significantly more mean hours to Employment (20 hours) and significantly fewer mean hours in Supportive Services (less than 1 hour) and Parenting (less than 1 hour), as compared with the other providers. Goodwill reported significantly more hours in Supportive Services (4 hours) than the other providers.

**Table 16. Average and Percentage of Hours of Service by Client by Category of Service**

IMPACS Service Provider	Average Hours Served <sup>2</sup>	Case Management	Employment	Supportive Services	Parenting
Goodwill (n=94)	18	8/47%	4/23%	4/24%	1/5%
Hilltop (n=62)	14	8/60%	1/9%	2/17%	2/14%
Employment Services (n=54)	27	7/25%	20*/74%	.02*/1%	.05*/0%
<b>Total (n=210)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8/42%</b>	<b>7/37%</b>	<b>3/16%</b>	<b>1/5%</b>

\*p<.01.

<sup>2</sup>The mean number of hours and the total of mean number of hours by type of service may differ due to rounding.

The level of services provided can also be examined relative to the number of reported sessions and the reported length of service. The mean number of sessions across all three providers was 32, and the mean length of service was six months. The results suggest that Goodwill served its clients more intensely relative to hours (three hours per month) and sessions (six sessions per month) in a briefer period (five months) than the other providers. Hilltop reported the largest mean number of months of service (11) and sessions (40), with an average of four sessions per month. Employment Services reported the highest number of hours (27) and hours per session (1.1).

**Table 17. Levels of Client Service**

IMPACS Service Provider	Mean Number of Hours	Mean Number of Sessions	Mean Months of Service
Goodwill (n=94)	18	30	5
Hilltop (n=62)	14	40	11*
Employment Services (n=53)	27	25	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>6</b>

\*p<.001.

## Financial Support

IMPACS service providers were able to provide indirect financial assistance through gift cards or vouchers to clients to help with transportation, employment training, and crisis stabilization, including emergency housing or food, work equipment or clothing, rent and utilities, and other expenses. Overall, 66 percent of clients received financial assistance, with an average of \$360 each. Together, the IMPACS service providers distributed \$75,311 in financial assistance to clients.

**Table 18. Financial Assistance Disbursement**

IMPACS Service Provider	Clients Receiving Financial Assistance	Mean Amount Total Clients	Mean Clients Receiving Assistance	# Disbursements Clients Receiving Assistance	Total Assistance Provided
Goodwill (n=94)	68/72%	\$215.77	\$298.23	2.4	\$20,279.32
Hilltop (n=62)	48/77%	\$587.58*	\$758.96	3	\$36,430.00
Employment Services (n=54)	23/43%*	\$350.98	\$808.79	1.8	\$18,602.17
<b>Total (n=210)</b>	<b>139/66%</b>	<b>\$360.34</b>	<b>\$541.81</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>\$75,311.49</b>

Each IMPACS service provider determined its own practice for distributing financial assistance, including the amount of assistance available per client and the types of support provided. Table 19 illustrates the distribution of funds across general categories and for specific purposes. Close to half of the funds distributed were allocated to employment-related expenses, including training, transportation, and technology. Training had the second highest amount of total funds distributed, but a relatively small number of distributions (13) were made. Transportation was the most common distribution (117), followed by food (96) and rent and utility support (90). Rent and utility support was the largest area of distribution at \$21,980. The type of needs IMPACS clients had for financial assistance echoed the barriers previously identified and speaks to the urgency of basic needs clients presented.

*They gave me a computer. That was huge because it made it a lot easier for me to tap into what is going on, compared to just hearing it from the streets . . . They made sure I had tokens or Uber so if I was going to be late. I got help, full help. – GOODWILL CLIENT*

Goodwill solicited and distributed resources from other organizations, in addition to the funds distributed by IMPACS. For example, one client qualified for a free used car, and other clients earned computers from a technology access program.

**Table 19. Funds Distribution by Service Category**

	Mean Amount	# of Distributions	Total Funds	% Total Funds
<b>Employment Related Financial Support</b>				
Assessment	\$37.38	65	\$2,415.50	48%
Basic Skills	\$171.33	9	\$1,542.00	
Technology	\$104.52	29	\$3,031.21	
Training	\$1,138.08	13	\$14,795.00	
Transportation	\$99.42	117	\$11,632.12	
Work-Related Tools or Clothing	\$79.56	33	\$2,625.57	
Essential Documents	\$47.10	8	\$376.83	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$239.63</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>\$36,418.23</b>	
<b>Housing</b>				
Permanent Housing	\$190.00	1	\$190.00	29%
Rent Utility Support	\$246.96	89	\$21,979.57	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$218.48</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>\$22,169.57</b>	
<b>Crisis Stabilization</b>				
General	\$79.47	20	\$1,589.45	18%
Food	\$61.31	96	\$5,886.11	
Emergency Housing	\$253.84	25	\$6,345.96	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$131.54</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>\$13,821.52</b>	
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
General Total	\$126.29	8	\$1,196.42	2%
Child Resources				
General	\$125.83	5	\$629.17	1%
School Related	\$235.43	1	\$235.43	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$180.63</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>\$864.60</b>	
<b>Recreation and Well-Being</b>				
General Total	\$70.10	12	\$841.15	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$141.83</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>\$75,311.49</b>	

As mentioned previously, the practices for allocation and distribution of funds varied among the IMPACS service providers. Both Goodwill and Hilltop distributed funds across all the categories, but Employment Services allocated almost all its funds to support employment, including assessment and training.

**Table 20. Categories of Funds Distribution by Service Provider**

	Goodwill	Hilltop	Employment Services	Total
Employment	\$8,307/41%	\$9,769/27%	\$18,342/99%	\$36,418/48%
Housing	\$6,254/31%	\$15,766/43%	\$150/>1%	\$22,170/29%
Crisis Stabilization	\$4,716/23%	\$9,106/25%		\$13,822/18%
Miscellaneous	\$255/1%	\$941/3%		\$1,196/2%
Child Resources	\$361/2%	\$504/1%		\$865/1%
Recreation	\$343/2%	\$388/1%	\$110/>1%	\$841/1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20,235</b>	<b>\$36,475</b>	<b>\$18,602</b>	<b>\$75,311</b>

# Reactions to Program

## Client Focus Group Overview

Focus groups were held with clients at all three IMPACS sites. Between three and seven clients participated in each site's focus group. The sessions were recorded and transcribed.

Across all three focus groups and IMPACS programs, clients profusely expressed their appreciation for the individualized attention, responsiveness, and trust generated by the IMPACS staff.

*It's easier to talk to somebody who actually can look you in the eye and say 'okay what is happening in your life right now? Like let's put this payment aside, like let's not even worry about this, like what is happening right now?'* – HILLTOP CLIENT

*They're so understanding, and it's on my time. Because through all of what I was going through, like being sick, being pregnant, being put in the hospital, through all of that. . . we were able to work around it or work with it. And I didn't get just cut off or thrown out of the program. It was like, "What can we do to help you succeed?"* – EMPLOYMENT SERVICES CLIENT

*They made me feel like I had somebody that I can depend on. And they haven't let me down yet. Like if I have a problem, I call them, and they're there.* – GOODWILL CLIENT

*He came through every single time to help me, and it made me to trust him to call him and be like, this is what's going on.* – HILLTOP CLIENT

Clients shared information about what motivated them to engage and stay committed to participation in the IMPACS program. One participant, who had his license suspended 10 years prior due to nonpayment, stated, "I was just tired. I was just like, I need my license. I got to work myself up there and just keep going." Speaking of the motivation provided by staff, another client stated, "They assured me, if I stick with the program, the program will help you. But you got to want it. You can't just sit back and receive and receive and receive . . . My mom sees the difference, the change in me. And I just want to better myself." Others shared that not paying their child support caused separation from their children, and reconnecting with their children was central to their motivation: "What motivates me is seeing my girls because I feel like every girl needs their father. My son, too, is helping me be a man, but every girl needs their dad."

Some IMPACS clients suggested that the program meets their needs and supports them in ways that other programs do not. One Hilltop client explained that many programs claim to support people but do not actually offer many resources, and eventually "you've walked through the entire list and you're still standing in the same position you were in the morning." This contrasted with her experience in IMPACS, where staff explained what they were able to provide and offered her tangible support.

Participants at all three groups suggested more outreach and advertisement should be done to make the program more accessible, suggesting that many more people would participate if they knew about it, particularly those recently released from incarceration. At Hilltop, clients suggested that the program be offered more "preventatively," as they felt it was only available to people once they "got in trouble" with child support.

*Getting the word out about the program could start on the inside, which is jail. A lot of people are coming out of there. I witness for myself, the scare in the sense of being out in society again, I don't know where to go, where to turn, who to look out for them. If you have a program like this that can advocate for you, it would be good.* – GOODWILL CLIENT

## Child Support Partners

Representatives from four of the five partner child support agencies gathered to provide feedback on the implementation of the IMPACS program. A child support staff person from Denver described their 2Gen program's collaboration with Goodwill in this way:

*IMPACS is pretty invaluable. They've had some rough bumps here and there with some staffing changes, but when someone fits into the parameters of the program, they're amazing to work with. We actually have a really strong collaboration here in Denver . . . We don't just refer them and walk away from it. It's an ongoing collaboration where we work really closely with the IMPACS team to service our parents. So, if IMPACS needs something done or has a question, they can reach out to me. We use Teams chats. We use that a lot to talk back and forth. That way, if somebody needs some RTD tickets, which we usually provide from our end, . . . if I need to work on doing any kind of IV-D debt forgiveness, anything like that, we go ahead and collaborate. We've also collaborated on doing food boxes. I do a lot of running in the community and meeting face-to-face with our parents. If IMPACS is having a gap and I need to do a resume with a parent, I'll do it. Most of the time they do that. Sometimes I step in. We've done joint phone calls to parents to work things out. It's really good sometimes to staff these things together and to meet with the parent, both of us, so that the parent hears from both of us. I just did one the other day with Kimberly, where I explained to mom, "Hey, you've been with the program a while. You've not made any progress. This is what's happening. We really need to see you start to step up and here are the things that we're going to need from you in order for us to keep your license in compliance." Then of course, Kim steps in and says, "Okay, well, here's where we are on the job stuff."*

Weld County Child Support staff described the evolution their referral process and collaboration with Employment Services:

*At first, we were kind of just sending the referrals over, having Employment Services do all the contact. I think one of our struggles was Employment Services was so used to working with clients that had to participate, that it was like a "two call and you're done" kind of mentality, so we really switched that around to . . . call these people more often, email them, send them letters. Recently, we've been doing warm handoffs. The technician schedules the appointment. And then when Tammy is scheduled to meet with the client, the technician from child support goes over to also meet with them. They already have a relationship with their child support technician, so this helps build that relationship with Tammy and bridge that gap. And that's been really beneficial because the clients feel more comfortable, I think, talking to their technician and having them kind of hand it off to Tammy that way. So that's been very useful.*

One child support staff member offered this suggestion on how to frame enrollment with IMPACS to clients:

*I try to kind of frame it as this is a very personal program and the program is really interested in finding a fit that's good for you and that's specific to your needs. I tell them that there's a possibility that they're going to help find you a position with a higher starting wage. And I think that that's helpful for people because . . . a lot of times they do have some specific skills that aren't being utilized or whatever, and they're not in a position that pays them what they're worth. So, I think it's helpful to let them know, like they may be able to find something for you that's more fitting to your financial needs and to your skillset.*

When asked about strategies to engage eligible clients, a child support representative said:

*That's probably what we've been struggling with the most: how do we just get them in and get them motivated? I think one thing we've seen is a lot of them who do go in, at first, we tried to jump right into job searching and but we found a lot of them really need supportive services first. Like you can't find a job if you don't have a house or a car, or all of these other things come before that. So, we have learned from that. And it just takes a little longer to get the child support paid because we have to get them situated first.*

All the child support representatives agreed that the time spent collaborating and meeting with the IMPACS staff was effective and a good use of their time. One person commented, "I wish I could get all of the groups that we work with to collaborate with us like IMPACS."

When asked how to increase referrals to IMPACS, these suggestions were offered:

- Reach out to paying parents proactively instead of only those parents not paying.
- Identify cases with uneven payment activity and invite participation in IMPACS.
- Do more outreach at the establishment phase of the case.

While the child support staff expressed appreciation for the expertise the IMPACS programs brought to services, they acknowledged the IMPACS staff had to engage in a learning curve relative to the nature of child support services at the start of services.



# Outcomes

Outcomes achieved by IMPACS clients were examined by assessing their accomplishments in the program (“milestones”), which were recorded by program staff. Changes in pre-test and post-test scores that clients attained on the Barriers and Child-Parent Evaluation Scales were also assessed. Finally, child support payments made by clients prior to and following their referral to and participation in IMPACS were compared. The Co-Parent Relationship Scale was not used as a post-test as originally planned due to the small sample size.

The period of service examined here is March 1, 2021, through April 30, 2023. As of April 30, 2023:

- 134 (64%) clients served were still receiving services
- 22 (10%) clients had successfully completed services
- 54 (26%) clients ended services prior to successful completion

Given the high rate of clients still receiving services, many of the outcomes described here, including milestones and child support payments, cannot be considered post-assessments, but instead can be considered measures of progress.

## Barriers and Child-Parent Relationship Scales

Clients were administered a post-assessment of the Barriers Scale and Child-Parent Relationship Scale at or after program completion.

Only those who completed IMPACS services were administered the post assessment. These individuals demonstrated a significant decrease in their overall barriers score, suggesting that **IMPACS services were effective at helping clients decrease barriers to self-sufficiency**. A reduction in barriers is an important precursor to achievement of the desired IMPACS outcomes, including improving employment outcomes, child support payments, and the child-parent relationship.

**Table 21. Barriers Scale Pre- and Post-Scores Comparison**

*A higher score on the scale indicates more barriers. A negative score in the “change” column indicates a decrease in scores from before (pre) to after (post) services*

IMPACS Service Provider	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Change
Goodwill (n=12)	11.7	4.8	-6.9**
Hilltop (n=5)	14	4.6	-9.4*
Employment Services Weld (n=5)	17.8	12	-5.8
<b>Total (n=22)</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>-7.2†</b>
Case Management Counties (n=16)	12.3	4.8	-7.5†
Regular Counties (n=6)	17	10.7	-6.3

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  † $p < .001$ .

Table 22 portrays the changes from the pre- to post-assessment on the Child-Parent Relationship Scale. As previously stated, this scale was administered only to those parents who indicated they had a relationship with their youngest child. Those who completed the pre-test had relatively low scores on the conflict scale (less conflict) and high scores on the closeness scale (more closeness). Post-test scores remained consistent with pre-test patterns. There was a slight decrease in the conflict scale and a very slight decrease in the closeness scale, but neither change was significant.

**Table 22. Child-Parent Relationship Scale Pre-Post Scores Comparison**

A higher score indicates more conflict or closeness, respectively. A negative score in the Change column indicates a decrease in conflict or closeness from before (pre) to after (post) services; a positive score indicates an increase.

IMPACS Service Provider	Child Parent Scale Conflict (n=19)			Child Parent Scale Closeness (n=19)		
	Pre	Post	Change	Pre	Post	Change
Goodwill Denver	12.4	11.4	-1	27.9	26.6	-1.3
Hilltop	18.3	12.7	-5.6	24.3	26.7	2.4
Employment Services	15.6	13.4	-2.2	25.4	26	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>14.2</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>-0.3</b>

The distribution of service hours and funds distributed for parenting-related activities and resources was quite low relative to other areas of service, which may have contributed to the lack of significant change on the Child-Parent Relationship Scale. It would have been useful to collect the information that was collected at intake again at the end of services, including the presence of a relationship with the youngest child, the frequency of interaction, and the degree of satisfaction with the child-parent relationship as additional measures of child-parent engagement to assess changes in the child-parent relationship.

## Milestones

Milestones were awarded to clients by the IMPACS programs upon achievement of designated goals. The milestones included numerous achievements and are summarized in the categories in Table 23. In addition to securing employment, the General Employment category includes securing essential documents, basic skill development, and workshops, among other milestones. Comprehensive Training includes Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) engagement or other extensive training. Parenting milestones include increased contact with children and engagement in parenting classes. Child support milestones include improving payment patterns and earning child support incentives, such as state-owed arrears reduction, among other activities.

While milestones are illustrative of the achievements of IMPACS clients, awarding milestones was not entirely consistent throughout the service period or across the service providers, so there are limitations to using milestones as outcome measures. However, milestones do give some indication of client achievements and progress in this limited evaluation of early services in the IMPACS program.

Forty percent of IMPACS clients were awarded employment milestones and 22 percent achieved child support milestones. Consistent with other measures illustrating a limited focus on parenting issues, only 11 percent of clients achieved milestones in the parenting category.

**Table 23. Milestones**

IMPACS Service Provider	Employment		Parenting		Child Support	
	#	% of Clients	#	% of Clients	#	% of Clients
Goodwill (n=68)	51	54%	5	5%	9	10%
Hilltop (n=48)	18	29%	18	29%	6	10%
Employment Services (n=23)	15	28%	1	2%	31	57%
<b>Total (n=139)</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>22%</b>

This evaluation was unable to examine employment records from the Department of Labor due to the small sample size and period of service. In the absence of this data, we relied on reports provided by the IMPACS service providers of employment secured by clients and their engagement with comprehensive training to determine whether the IMPACS goal of improving employment outcomes was met. According to this information, 40 percent of

clients secured employment and an additional 4 percent secured preferable or full-time employment, as illustrated in Table 24. As a comprehensive job center, clients at Employment Services were more likely to engage in WIOA or other comprehensive employment training, leading to preferred or full-time employment. Over 50 percent of clients at Goodwill secured employment, compared to under 30 percent at the other sites. Together, these milestones suggest the IMPACS programs were successful at improving employment outcomes.

**Table 24. Employment Milestones**

IMPACS Service Provider	Comprehensive Training		Secured Employment		Secured Preferred or Full-Time Employment	
	#	% of Clients	#	% of Clients	#	% of Clients
Goodwill (n=94)	1	1%	51	54%	1	1%
Hilltop (n=62)	0	0%	18	29%	0	0%
Employment Services (n=54)	7	13%	15	28%	7	13%
Total (n=210)	8	4%	84	40%	8	4%

## Child Support Payments

DCSS provided an extract of child support payments made by individuals referred to IMPACS services, including both those served and those who chose not to engage in services. Payment patterns were analyzed for six months prior to and after the IMPACS referral, encompassing a period from August 1, 2020, to April 30, 2023. Payment patterns were examined only for those whose payment data was available for both time periods: six months before referral and six months after referral. Within these parameters, 149 people were engaged in services, and 69 people were referred to but did not engage in services.

**Table 25. Child Support Payment Extract Sample**

IMPACS Service Provider	Referred, Did Not Engage in Services	Engaged in Services	Total Sample
Goodwill	13	56	69
Hilltop	13	45	58
Employment Services	43	48	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>218</b>

Despite comparable monthly obligations and arrears balances at baseline as reported earlier, those who were referred to but did not engage in services made significantly higher payments both prior to and after referral to IMPACS. This may suggest that those who did not engage had more ability to meet their child support obligations independently than did those who engaged in services.

**Table 26. Pre- and Post-Referral Child Support Payment Totals**

	Referred Only (n= 69)	Engaged in Services (n=149)
Pre-Referral Total Payments	\$1459.88**	\$1035.01
Post-Referral Total Payments	\$1815.99*	\$953.87

\* Significant (p. < .001); \*\* Significant (p. < .10).

There are several limitations to our analysis of child support payment patterns and the apparent improvement shown by clients who were referred to but did not engage in program services. As previously described, child support payments during the period examined were likely influenced—both positively and negatively—by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the extent of its impact on payment patterns cannot be identified. Another limitation is the large proportion (52%) of clients who engaged in services who were still participating in the program when the post-test data on payments was extracted and examined. It is likely that child support payment patterns

for these clients will improve when they complete the IMPACS program and that the snapshot of their payment performance for this report was taken too soon.

We get a different picture of payment outcomes when we restrict the analysis to the 10 percent of IMPACS participants (n=22) who were designated by service providers as having successfully completed the program. A client was considered for “graduation” after they were gainfully employed and able to make child support payments for several months. **Overall, IMPACS graduates’ child support payment patterns indicate improvements in the total amount paid and the number of payments. The average total amount of payments in the six months after referral to IMPACS increased by \$596.92 or 54% more than the amount paid prior to referral. IMPACS graduates made an average of one payment more in the six months after referral than in the six months prior to referral.** Goodwill had the most program graduates (n=14), and these individuals were able to pay 91 percent more after engaging with IMPACS than in the previous period. The four Hilltop graduates increased both their payment amounts and the number of payments made. Employment Services also graduated four clients, but their total payment amounts decreased slightly.

**Table 27. Successful Completion Child Support Payment Totals by IMPACS Program**

Payment Pattern & Program Completions	Goodwill	Hilltop	Employment Services	Total
# of Successful Completions	14	4	4	22
Pre-Referral Total Payment Amounts	\$882.61	\$571.50	\$2404.49	\$1102.75
Post-Referral Total Payment Amounts	\$1689.97	\$1365.93	\$2067.32	\$1699.66
<b>Change in Total Payments</b>	<b>\$807.37</b>	<b>\$794.43</b>	<b>-\$337.10</b>	<b>\$596.92</b>
<b>Percent Changes in Payment Amounts</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>139%</b>	<b>-14%</b>	<b>54%</b>
Pre-Referral Number of Payments	2.21	2.25	3.75	2.50
Post Referral Payment Patterns	3.36	4.50	3.75	3.64
<b>Change in Number of Payments</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>1.14</b>
<b>Percent Change in the Number of Payments</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>45%</b>

Across the entire sample of IMPACS clients with sufficient payment information to analyze, payments before and after the referral date were essentially the same. At the six-month mark, many IMPACS clients were still engaged in addressing barriers and securing employment as a precursor to making consistent child support payments. The award of child support-related milestones generally began after an average of four months of engagement, further suggesting that changes in child support payment patterns for clients still in service had not yet fully materialized at the six-month mark. In future analyses, we will be able to extend the period of payments to better measure the impact of the program on post-program payment patterns.

**Table 28. Pre- and Post-Child Support Payment Totals by IMPACS Program**

Payment Pattern and Program Completions	Goodwill (n=56)	Hilltop (n=45)	Employment Services (n=48)	Total (n=149)
Pre-Referral Total Payments	\$750.84	\$1128.66	\$1278.77	\$1035.02
Post-Referral Total Payments	\$925.12	\$1115.12	\$836.25	953.87
Change in Total Payments	\$174.28	-\$13.54	-\$442.51	-\$81.14
Pre-Referral Number of Payments	1.75	2.58	2.85	2.36
Post-Referral Payment Patterns	1.86	2.58	2.27	2.21
<b>Change in Number of Payments</b>	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.58</b>	<b>-0.15</b>

## 2GEN SERVICES

The 2Gen services offered at Denver and Montrose Child Support created a substantially different experience for clients than those who were referred by counties providing more routine services. Staff at the 2Gen counties had more extensive relationships and engagement with their clients and a more thorough understanding of both the clients’ needs and the appropriateness of a referral to IMPACS. The services provided by the 2Gen counties complimented and extended the services provided by IMPACS and vice versa.

Although the characteristics of clients referred to IMPACS by the 2Gen counties were similar to those referred by counties providing routine services, with both reporting comparable levels of barriers at the start of IMPACS services, their outcomes differed. **Workers in 2Gen counties made higher rates of referrals to IMPACS, and clients demonstrated higher rates of service uptake. They also exhibited higher completion rates, lower rates of service attrition, a greater decrease in barriers, and more employment secured. In addition, clients from the 2Gen counties made larger and a greater number of child support payments than did other clients.** Interestingly, both the mean number of hours of service and amount of funding support provided were less for clients from the 2Gen counties, suggesting these clients were able to move in and through IMPACS services more quickly than others.

**Table 29. Outcomes by 2Gen and Routine Child Support Services**

Characteristic or Outcome	2Gen Child Support Services (n=128)	Routine Child Support Services (n=82)
Referrals	165/52%	154/48%
Engaged in Services	128/61%	82/39%
Rate of Service Engagement	78%	53%
Barriers Pre Score	14.7	14.74
Average Hours Served	18.78	20.37
Successful Completion	17/13%	6/7%
Removed or Dropped Out of Services	15/12%	38/46%
Funds Provided	\$488.56	\$673.61
Changes in Barriers Scale Score	-7.5*	-6.33
Milestones Achieved	93/73%	61/74%
Employment Secured or Improved	63/49%	30/37%
<b>Changes in Total Child Support Payments</b>	<b>\$124.69</b>	<b>-\$404.09</b>
<b>Changes in Number of Payments</b>	<b>.04</b>	<b>-.45</b>



## Portraits of Success<sup>3</sup>

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Susan enrolled in the IMPACS program at Employment Services in June 2021. Susan is the mother of three children, two of whom live with her, while the oldest child lives with his dad. She was not in contact with her oldest child, a 14-year-old boy, or his father but hoped this would change. Susan had not worked since 2019, and Tammy, Susan's IMPACS caseworker, worked with Susan to assess her interests and skills to create a plan for improving her employability and reentering the workforce. Susan expressed interest in the medical field, and Tammy helped enroll her in a medical assistant certification program through the WIOA program at Employment Services in January 2022. Susan's engagement with the training ebbed and flowed through the year, as life presented unexpected challenges and experiences. Susan encountered multiple crises in her home life, including the incarceration of her boyfriend and an unexpected pregnancy. Tammy worked in collaboration with Susan's TANF caseworker, together prodding and supporting Susan to complete her coursework. As the deadline for completion of the coursework approached, Susan gave birth prematurely to her infant, who required hospitalization. Tammy was able to secure an extension of time for Susan's WIOA training. Susan's experience with giving birth and the care her infant received at the hospital reawakened her motivation to pursue a career in the medical field. She used her time spent at the hospital with her child to successfully complete her coursework. Her next step is taking the national certification exam, and once complete, Tammy and Susan look forward to Susan's placement in her first job as a medical assistant.

Susan very much wanted to be in contact with her son, but his father has full custody, and he and Susan do not have a good relationship. Prompted by her engagement with IMPACS, Susan went to court and secured the right to see her son once a month. She had not seen her son for over three years. Their first visit was for only five minutes, as they were both nervous getting reacquainted. Each visit throughout the following months showed progress in rebuilding their relationship, and they soon felt comfortable enough to hug one another. Susan is excited for her son to meet his siblings and looks forward to introducing them at a future visit.

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Bob and Linda lost custody of their children due to their drug addictions, and both have been ordered to pay child support. The loss of custody of their children was the wake-up call both needed to confront their substance abuse issues, and together they have eagerly engaged in services to help them regain custody of their children. Bob enrolled and completed Hilltop Family Resource Center's Nurturing Dads and Parents Training (NDPT) and, through this program, was referred to Paul at the IMPACS program. Once enrolled in IMPACS, Bob brought along Linda, who engaged in other services offered by Hilltop, including parenting classes and supportive services. Bob and Linda participate in supervised visitation with their children for two hours twice a week, and the plan for reunification from child protective services demands engagement in multiple activities and services. The parents are focused on regaining custody of their children, but meeting the requirements for reunification has made it difficult to earn the income necessary to meet child support obligations. Through the routine collaboration between Paul, the IMPACS case manager, and Jon, the Montrose Child Support parent coach, the parents' challenging schedule was considered, and Jon was able to mitigate the risk of child support enforcement in response. This has allowed both parents to focus all their attention on meeting the requirements for reunification with their children.

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Frank enjoys a good relationship with his teenage son, seeing him regularly and talking on the phone every day. After leaving the military, Frank started receiving disability payments but has been falling behind with his child

<sup>3</sup>Names have been changed to protect anonymity.

support and other basic expenses and needs to supplement his income. After referral to Goodwill IMPACS by Denver Child Support, Frank was slow to engage in services, but the IMPACS staff's persistence in reaching out persuaded him, and he scheduled a meeting. At a McDonald's on East Colfax Avenue, Frank shared information about his situation and interests. Prior to joining the military, Frank had many years of experience as a manager at a car maintenance shop, and he hoped to secure another management job. The IMPACS program helped Frank update his resume and create a plan for reviewing and following up on job leads. Frank was also interested in making his home more inviting for his son, so Goodwill provided a new futon couch and two bikes so he and his son could ride together. The staff at Goodwill solicited the donation of bikes and was happy to support quality time between Frank and his son. Goodwill forwarded several jobs leads to Frank, one of which turned into a full-time management position with the opportunity for advancement. Since then, Frank has been meeting his child support obligations, improved his overall quality of life, and is able to live comfortably with his disability and employment incomes.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

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While the IMPACS program launched services amid the COVID-19 pandemic, 210 clients were served and supported in their efforts to gain the self-sufficiency needed to better meet their child support obligations. Typical of many new programs, the scale-up of services and enrollment of clients was slower than anticipated. The three IMPACS service providers developed and implemented services aligned with their diverse organizational missions.

Discover Goodwill leveraged its job training focus with expertise in serving individuals with economic challenges to implement the IMPACS program in Denver and Jefferson counties. Goodwill engaged in active job development, identifying employers willing and able to hire IMPACS clients, and quickly placed clients in jobs whenever possible. Goodwill solicited and distributed diverse resources to its clients to help with transportation and other obstacles to employment. Goodwill produced the strongest outcomes among the IMPACS providers, serving the largest number of clients through strong partnerships with Denver and Jefferson Child Support agencies.

Hilltop Family Resource Center applied its family service lens to IMPACS services. Through extensive case management services, Hilltop utilized motivational interviewing to identify clients' needs and interests in order to focus their efforts on areas clients were ready to address. For many Hilltop clients, crisis stabilization was the top priority, including substance abuse treatment and securing housing. Hilltop staff worked closely with staff from Montrose Child Support, forming a powerful team to advance the interest of clients. Most of the clients served by Hilltop were from Montrose County, but Delta County Child Support was an additional partner.

Employment Services of Weld County partnered with Weld County Child Support, housed in the same Human Services building in Greeley. As a traditional job and workforce development center, Employment Services offered a wide range of workshops, assessment, training, and job search resources. IMPACS services in Weld County evolved from more traditional employment services at the start of the program to providing more extensive case management intended to address clients' barriers to self-sufficiency. Employment Services developed a strong partnership with Weld County Child Support, which leveraged child support incentives, such as reductions in state-owed arrears, to encourage enrollment. Effectively engaging clients was challenging for all the IMPACS programs but was particularly challenging for Employment Services.

The small number of IMPACS clients and a short period available for data analysis limited the overall analysis of IMPACS services. However, data collected internally, analysis of child support payment patterns, evaluator observations, and feedback provide useful information to inform future program implementation:

- As expected, it was difficult to engage eligible clients in services, and once engaged, the clients' substantial barriers to self-sufficiency demanded attention and focus from service providers.
- Service providers were effective at reducing these barriers, with clients demonstrating a significant decrease in the number and severity of challenges reported at the post-program assessment.
- While there were no set expectations on the length of service IMPACS should provide, clients were engaged for an average of six months when the post-program data was generated, a figure that will continue to rise as many had not yet "graduated." This suggests that clients need a substantial amount of time to address the many challenges they face before they can pay their child support obligations. Future programs should take this into account in their planning.
- The IMPACS service providers succeeded at establishing strong partnerships and collaborations with the referring child support agencies. These partnerships developed over time, and both the service providers and child support staff found strong value in this collaboration.
- Many IMPACS clients gained employment, as reported through milestones awarded by the IMPACS service provider. With more time and a larger sample, future IMPACS evaluations should be able to examine data from a Department of Labor extract, enabling a more complete analysis of employment outcomes.
- Among the small sample of individuals who graduated from the IMPACS program (n=22), child support payment patterns improved.
- Across the entire IMPACS sample, there was no demonstrated improvement in payment patterns between the periods before and after referral to and participation in the program. Since many of the IMPACS clients included in this sample had not completed services, it is not surprising that child support payment patterns do not yet reflect improvement. A future evaluation should include more extensive analysis of child support payment activity over longer periods not impacted by a global pandemic.
- Child support payment patterns among IMPACS clients suggest that those who have a relationship with their child, a neutral or positive relationship with the co-parent, and/or a parenting-time agreement had better payment patterns than those who do not. The IMPACS goal of enhancing child-parent relationships acknowledges the importance of the intersection between the child-parent relationship and child support payments. However, in this early implementation, IMPACS programs struggled to implement strategies and services to address parent engagement issues systematically.
- IMPACS offered clients vital financial and in-kind support for employment-related expenses like training, transportation, and work clothing, as well as basic needs, including food and housing assistance.
- The IMPACS program was most effective when coupled with 2Gen services provided at the partner child support agency. The supportive services provided by the 2Gen programs, along with the teamwork between the 2Gen and IMPACS staff, had a positive impact on experiences and outcomes for IMPACS clients.
- Clients from all three IMPACS programs reported very positive feedback about the IMPACS staff, expressing appreciation for the individualized and nonjudgmental support they provided.
- The use of a dedicated management information system and monthly meetings between the service providers, DCSS, and the evaluators was an effective strategy for monitoring and supporting program implementation.

## Recommendations

1. IMPACS should serve more clients. This will require additional referrals from partner child support agencies as well as the use of other direct outreach and promotional strategies. Outreach and training to child support magistrates and attorneys would likely increase referrals, as would opportunities for interested clients to learn about the program from sources beyond their child support technician. Low barriers to eligibility would be helpful. As recommended by IMPACS clients, outreach to parole boards and to individuals recently released from incarceration would be a helpful recruitment strategy.
2. Encourage child support agencies to implement internal 2Gen services as a complement to IMPACS services. The outcomes for both 2Gen services and IMPACS will improve if services are provided in tandem. Low-income NCPs unable to meet their child support obligations experience barriers compounded by child support enforcement actions. Instead of compelling payments, the enforcement actions often further limit the parent's ability to meet their child support obligations. 2Gen services within child support services help address and mitigate these circumstances and the partnership with IMPACS adds the necessary support for employment that then improves child support payments.
3. Continue the strong collaboration between child support agencies and IMPACS programs. Work with child support agencies to consistently leverage child support incentives, such as reinstatement of driver's licenses or state-owed debt reduction. Fully capture this allocation of incentives to allow for analysis of related outcomes within IMPACS programs.
4. Set expectations and provide training resources for providers on effective case management techniques, including motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, and working with formerly incarcerated clients. Recognize the need for crisis stabilization as a first step for many in their path towards self-sufficiency and overcoming the very substantial barriers experienced by many IMPACS clients.
5. Articulate specific requirements relative to collaboration and incorporation of parenting services, including parenting time agreement establishment and other resources, and increase IMPACS programs' focus on parenting, including improving co-parenting relationships. Additional measures to document changes in parent engagement are needed for future evaluations.
6. Continue providing indirect financial resources to IMPACS clients. Not only were these resources greatly appreciated by clients, but they also helped to stabilize clients' living situations and to improve the effectiveness of employment interventions and resources extended to them.

The outcomes derived from this early implementation of the IMPACS program suggest a very promising future for the program and clients served. If implemented on a larger scale, IMPACS is poised to meet its goals of increasing child support payments, improving employment outcomes, and enhancing parent-child relationships. Early findings illustrate that relationship-based case management and supportive services are key to positive outcomes, as is ample time and resources to address the substantial and immediate barriers faced by parents. Strong partnerships between child support agencies and the IMPACS service providers are critical, and outcomes are strongest when child support agencies refer from their internal 2Gen services. The IMPACS program has great potential to produce a strong return on investment for the Colorado Division of Child Support Services.