

Cooperation and Good Cause

Rachel Wildfeuer, Ph.D., Center for Policy Research

Introduction

Child support cooperation requirements refer to policies that require public assistance applicants and recipients (participants)¹ to help the child support program locate noncustodial parents (NCPs), establish paternity and child support orders, as well as to obtain child support payments. In every state and tribe, participants can be exempted from the cooperation requirements if they have a legal reason, or “good cause,” not to cooperate, such as experiencing past physical harm by the NCP.²

This document provides an overview of child support cooperation requirements and good cause exemptions, as well as state- or tribal-specific information for the 13 child support programs³ selected by the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) in the Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to be demonstration sites in the Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security (SAVES) project, a multi-year initiative to improve the safety of child support programs for survivors of domestic violence. As part of this initiative, OCSS funded the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) to create the SAVES Center, a national resource center to support state, tribal, and local child support programs as they work to improve safe access to child support and parenting time for survivors of domestic violence. DCSS contracted with three organizations to operate the SAVES Center – the Center for Policy Research (CPR), the Battered Women's Justice Project (BWJP), and the Centre for Public Impact (CPI).

As part of the SAVES project, some demonstration sites are engaging domestic violence experts and survivors to review and revise existing good cause policies and procedures for survivors accessing public benefits with child support cooperation requirements.⁴

The Safe Access for Victims' Economic Security (SAVES) Center, funded by the Office of Child Support Services (OCSS), provides research, training, technical assistance, and policy and collaboration guidance to increase safe access to child support and parenting time for survivors of domestic violence. The SAVES Center is a partnership among:

- ▶ Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Division of Child Support Services (DCSS)
- ▶ Center for Policy Research (CPR)
- ▶ Battered Women's Justice Project (BWJP)
- ▶ Centre for Public Impact (CPI)

For more information, visit

<https://savescenter.org/>

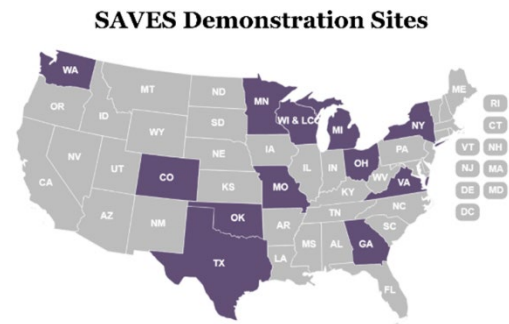
¹If a public assistance program has a child support cooperation requirement, a parent will get referred to child support upon application for benefits; a similar process occurs at recertification

²Office of Child Support Services. (2023). *Glossary of common child support terms*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/glossary>.

³Colorado, Georgia, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (Lac Courte Oreilles), Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin

⁴Administration for Children and Families. (2022). *ACF awards \$11.2 million to grantees for domestic violence survivors to safely access necessary child support resources*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/archive/media/press/2022/acf-awards-112-million-grantees-domestic-violence-survivors-safely-access>.

Drawing on research and federal guidance, this document discusses cooperation requirements and good cause, including highlighting best practices and recommendations for states and tribes. Drawing on publicly available information from the SAVES demonstration sites (for example, policy manuals and program applications), supplemented with input from demonstration site staff, this document also discusses patterns in the current policies regarding cooperation requirements and good cause at the demonstrations sites to provide a foundation for their ongoing project activities related to cooperation requirements and good cause. See **Appendix A** for the sources of publicly available information for each demonstration site. Of note, the publicly available information may differ from internal documents and/or what demonstration sites do in practice.



Cooperation Requirements

Overview

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and foster care maintenance payments under Title IV-E of the Social Security Act mandate that participants who are parents cooperate with the state child support program.⁵ In addition, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 gives states the option to extend the requirement to other public assistance programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the child care subsidy program funded under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF).^{6, 7, 8} Tribal TANF programs can decide whether to require child support cooperation for TANF.⁹

Child support cooperation requirements are rooted in the program's original purpose of reimbursing the government for public assistance benefits paid to families.¹⁰ In addition to cost recovery benefits, those in favor of cooperation requirements argue that it makes it easier for custodial parents (CPs) to access child support, facilitates the NCP providing financial support for the child(ren), and may enable the child(ren) to interact with the NCP.^{11, 12} CPs often report that it is unclear how cooperation requirements differ by public assistance program and that they are not adequately informed that participating in a public assistance program may lead to required cooperation with child support.¹³

⁵ Title IV-D of the Social Security Act establishes the child support program and Title IV-A of the Social Security Act funds TANF; IV-D and IV-A are sometimes used to refer to the child support program and TANF

⁶ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2018). *Child support cooperation requirements in child care subsidy programs and SNAP: Key policy considerations*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/child-support-cooperation-requirements-child-care-subsidy-programs-snap-key-policy-considerations>.

⁷ Food and Nutrition Service. (2024). *SNAP – State policy options related to custodial and non-custodial parent cooperation with state CSAs*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-policy-options-child-support>.

⁸ While the TANF and Medicaid cooperation requirement can only be applied to the custodial parent, the SNAP cooperation requirement can be applied to noncustodial parents

⁹ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). *OFA-OCSS joint letter on tribal child support cooperation requirements*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-tribal-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

¹⁰ William, R. (2017). *A proposal for modernizing TANF distribution in the child support program*. Veritas HHS.

¹¹ Cancian, M., & Doar, R. (2024). Child support policy: Areas of emerging agreement and ongoing debate. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 43(3), 938-943. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.22590>.

¹² Food and Nutrition Service. (2025). *Evaluation of child support enforcement cooperation requirements in SNAP*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/child-support-enforcement-requirements>.

¹³ Vogel, L. K., Dennis, A. M., & Keita, N. (2022). *Perceptions of fairness in child support*. Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Retrieved from <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CSRA-2020-2022-T4B.pdf>.

If the parent does not cooperate with child support and does not receive a good cause exemption (see below for more information), the family will be ineligible for at least 25 percent of its TANF benefits and states and tribes have the option to be stricter by further reducing or terminating the TANF benefit. In terms of Medicaid, the parent will be penalized, or sanctioned, but their child(ren) can continue to receive Medicaid. The sanction policy for other types of public assistance varies by state or tribe.¹⁴

Patterns at the SAVES Demonstration Sites

CPR reviewed publicly available information, and consulted with demonstration site staff, to outline:

- How the state or tribe defines child support cooperation
- If the state or tribe has additional cooperation requirements with SNAP, child care, and/or other public assistance programs beyond the cooperation requirements that are federally required with TANF, Medicaid, and foster care maintenance
- The sanctions for non-cooperation that are imposed by the state or tribe

Cooperation Definitions

There are universal components to how the SAVES demonstration sites define cooperation. Participants are required to:

- Provide the name and any other identifying information about the NCP that might help the agency find an absent parent
- Assist with establishing paternity (or in some jurisdictions, establishing parentage)
- Report any money that is paid by the other parent
- Appear for any meetings, hearings, or other legal proceedings

Virginia is the only demonstration site to note that if a problem is identified that impacts cooperation (for example, lack of transportation), the local child support agency must assist the individual, if requested.

Additional Cooperation Requirements

SNAP

None of the SAVES demonstration sites have a child support cooperation requirement for SNAP.¹⁵ One site, **Michigan**, removed their cooperation requirement for SNAP in October 2024.

Child Care

Five of the SAVES demonstration sites (**Colorado, Minnesota, New York, Texas, and Wisconsin**) have child support cooperation requirements for child care.¹⁶ One site, **Michigan**, removed their cooperation requirement for child care in February 2024.

Other Public Assistance Programs

Several demonstration sites have child support cooperation requirements for other public assistance programs:

- **Lac Courte Oreilles** has a cooperation requirement for their kinship care program

¹⁴ Food and Nutrition Service. (2025). *Evaluation of child support enforcement cooperation requirements in SNAP*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/child-support-enforcement-requirements>.

¹⁵ Food and Nutrition Service. (2025). *Evaluation of child support enforcement cooperation requirements in SNAP*. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/child-support-enforcement-requirements>.

¹⁶ Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. (2018). *Child support cooperation requirements in child care subsidy programs and SNAP: Key policy considerations*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://aspe.hhs.gov/reports/child-support-cooperation-requirements-child-care-subsidy-programs-snap-key-policy-considerations>.

- **Minnesota** has a child support cooperation requirement for its Diversionary Work Program (DWP),¹⁷ a short-term program that aims to help caregivers find jobs before they participate in the state’s TANF program; however, DWP is being repealed as of March 1, 2026¹⁸
- **Washington** has a child support cooperation requirement for State Family Assistance (SFA),¹⁹ a program that is available to clients who are ineligible for TANF for specific reasons
- In **Wisconsin**, parents must cooperate with the child support agency in order to receive Caretaker Supplement (CTS) payments,²⁰ a cash benefit available to parents who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments; in addition, parents must assign the state the right to collect and retain a portion of court-ordered child support to recover costs of the CTS benefit
- **Wisconsin** also has a cooperation requirement for their kinship care program

Sanctions for Non-Cooperation

Eight of the SAVES demonstration sites (**Colorado, Georgia, Lac Courte Oreilles, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin**) currently have sanctions to TANF program benefits for child support non-cooperation (without a good cause exemption) that are stricter than the federally mandated 25 percent reduction in family benefits:

- In **Colorado**, the sanction is termination or discontinuation of family benefits
- In **Georgia** and **Lac Courte Oreilles**, the sanction is ineligibility to receive family benefits
- In **Michigan**, the sanction is ineligibility for a minimum of one month
- In **Minnesota**, the sanction is a 30 percent reduction in family benefits; however, it will become a 25 percent reduction as of May 1, 2026²¹
- In **Ohio**, the first failure to cooperate results in the termination of family benefits for one month, the second for three months, and the third or more failure(s) for six months
- In **Texas**, the sanction is the elimination of family benefits
- In **Wisconsin**, the sanction is also the elimination of family benefits; and if anyone in the household is sanctioned three times, the family will not receive benefits until everyone in the household cooperates, or for a period of six months, whichever is later

Eight of the SAVES demonstration sites currently have sanctions for non-cooperation with TANF that are stricter than the federally mandated 25 percent reduction in family benefits.

As previously mentioned, with Medicaid, the parent loses benefits,²² but their child(ren) can continue to receive Medicaid. The sites vary in terms of their sanctions for child care and other public assistance programs.

¹⁷ Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2025). *Diversionary Work Program (DWP)*. Retrieved from <https://dcyf.mn.gov/programs-directory/diversionary-work-program-dwp>.

¹⁸ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2023). *2023 Legislative changes to public assistance programs (#23-69-04)*. Retrieved from [Bulletin 23-69-04 2023 Legislative Changes to Public Assistance Programs](#).

¹⁹ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. (2025). *SFA*. Economic Services Administration. Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/program-summary/sfa>.

²⁰ State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (2023). *Caretaker Supplement: Instructions for application*. Retrieved from <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms1/f2/f22571a.pdf>.

²¹ Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2023). *2023 Legislative changes to public assistance programs (#23-69-04)*. Retrieved from [Bulletin 23-69-04 2023 Legislative Changes to Public Assistance Programs](#).

²² Sites clarify that a pregnant individual will not lose Medicaid benefits during their pregnancy and for two months after

Good Cause

Overview

Child support cooperation requirements may be waived due to “good cause and other exceptions”. Good cause may be determined by the state agency responsible for child support, TANF, Medicaid, foster care, and/or SNAP.²³

State child support agencies have the authority to close cases referred by a public assistance agency if they believe it is not appropriate to provide child support services. Safety concerns may make child support services inappropriate, and dangerous, for survivors. OCSS notes in January 2025 policy guidance that in states where the public assistance agency has the authority to grant good cause, requiring a survivor to obtain good cause before the child support case can be closed may be retraumatizing and delay protective measures for the survivor and their child(ren).²⁴ Tribal child support programs also have the flexibility to establish their criteria to close child support cases.²⁵

Although research conducted in TANF and child support programs suggest that approximately 40 percent of applicants disclose having experienced domestic violence, few receive a good cause exemption from child support cooperation across all the public assistance programs.²⁶ The available statistics indicate just how few:

- A study of SNAP cooperation requirements in nine states found that in most of the study states, SNAP records show that less than 1 percent of child support cases had a good cause determination²⁷
- Similarly, in FY 2022, only 0.5 percent of TANF recipients had a good cause exemption from the work participation requirements due to intimate partner violence²⁸

Eligibility

The state agency must take into account the best interests of the child when defining what constitutes good cause and other exceptions. A January 2025 joint letter from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) and OCSS notes that states have the discretion and flexibility to consider additional circumstances that warrant an exception to cooperation beyond situations of domestic violence, rape, incest, and adoption. OFA and OCSS encourage states to both consider additional recurring circumstances that warrant a good cause exemption and to consider individual case-by-case

OFA and OCSS encourage states to consider broader situations that may warrant a good cause exemption.

²³ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). OCSS state plan data. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://ocsp.acf.hhs.gov/stateplan/welcome.htm>.

²⁴ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). Policies to promote safety and economic stability for survivors of domestic violence in the child support program. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/policies-promote-safety-and-economic-stability-survivors-domestic-violence>.

²⁵ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). OFA-OCSS joint letter on tribal child support cooperation requirements. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-tribal-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

²⁶ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). Policies to promote safety and economic stability for survivors of domestic violence in the child support program. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/policies-promote-safety-and-economic-stability-survivors-domestic-violence>.

²⁷ Food and Nutrition Service. (2025). Evaluation of child support enforcement cooperation requirements in SNAP. U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/research/snap/child-support-enforcement-requirements>.

²⁸ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). OFA-OCSS joint letter on child support cooperation requirements. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

circumstances where cooperation may not be in the best interest of the child.²⁹ Tribes can set their criteria for good cause based on their unique needs and circumstances.³⁰

PRWORA instituted the Family Violence Option (FVO), which gives states the option to adopt policy requiring the screening of TANF participants for domestic violence, the referral of individuals who screen positive for additional services, and the waiving of certain TANF requirements for these individuals, including child support cooperation.³¹ In **New York**, each social services district is required to have at least one Domestic Violence Liaison (DVL) whose primary role is fulfill the goals and objectives of the FVO.³² Tribes similarly can adopt the FVO and implement comprehensive strategies for identifying and serving survivors of domestic violence in their TANF program.³³ Although most states have adopted the FVO, there is variation in how it is implemented. Evaluations of state practices find that caseworkers do not regularly notify applicants of their waiver options, do not screen all applicants for domestic violence, and do not refer survivors to counseling.³⁴ Recognizing that challenges persist in identifying and sharing information with TANF participants who are at risk of violence, Congress added a certification and training requirement to TANF state plans in 2022.³⁵

Related to these concerns, the January 2025 joint letter from OFA and OCSS encourages state TANF and child support agency collaboration to better assist survivors by connecting survivors to needed supports, providing training for caseworkers, and informing TANF participants of the services available to them if they have experienced domestic violence.³⁶ Additionally, establishing a screening process to identify domestic violence can help with inconsistencies in the implementation of the FVO and more effectively connect survivors with needed supports.^{37, 38}

OFA and OCSS encourage state TANF and child support agency collaboration to better assist survivors.

²⁹ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). *OFA-OCSS joint letter on child support cooperation requirements*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

³⁰ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). *OFA-OCSS joint letter on tribal child support cooperation requirements*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-tribal-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

³¹ Holcomb, S., Johnson, L., Hetling, A., Postmus, J. L., Steiner, J., Braasch, L., & Riordan, A. (2017). Implementation of the Family Violence Option 20 years later: A review of state welfare rules for domestic violence survivors. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 16(4), 415-431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15588742.2017.1311820>.

³² New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. (2003). *Child support and the Family Violence Option* (03 ADM 5). Retrieved from https://otda.ny.gov/policy/directives/2003/ADM/03_ADM-05.pdf.

³³ 45 C.F.R. § 286.5 (2025). Retrieved from <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-45/subtitle-B/chapter-II/part-286/subpart-A/section-286.5>.

³⁴ Holcomb, S., Johnson, L., Hetling, A., Postmus, J. L., Steiner, J., Braasch, L., & Riordan, A. (2017). Implementation of the Family Violence Option 20 years later: A review of state welfare rules for domestic violence survivors. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 16(4), 415-431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15588742.2017.1311820>.

³⁵ Office of Family Assistance. (2023). *New state TANF certification requirement enacted in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/ofa/policy-guidance/tanf-acf-pi-2022-02>.

³⁶ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). *OFA-OCSS joint letter on child support cooperation requirements*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

³⁷ Holcomb, S., Johnson, L., Hetling, A., Postmus, J. L., Steiner, J., Braasch, L., & Riordan, A. (2017). Implementation of the Family Violence Option 20 years later: A review of state welfare rules for domestic violence survivors. *Journal of Policy Practice*, 16(4), 415-431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15588742.2017.1311820>.

³⁸ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). *OFA-OCSS joint letter on child support cooperation requirements*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/ofa-ocss-joint-letter-child-support-cooperation-requirements>.

In July 2025, the **Minnesota** Department of Children, Youth, and Families published a joint bulletin on good cause.³⁹ This joint bulletin was developed in coordination with child support and all programs that refer clients to child support to clarify Minnesota’s current good cause policy and disseminate best practices to create consistent procedures to ensure the safety of all parties.

Documentation

States and tribes vary in the type of documentation that is required to receive good cause.⁴⁰ While most jurisdictions require some kind of third-party documentation (for example, police, court, or hospital records), survivors often cannot provide official documentation.^{41, 42} Survivors report that obtaining a statement from a friend, therapist, or advocate are safer and easier options.⁴³ In order to reduce the burdens placed on survivors of domestic violence, OCSS recommends that state child support agencies accept and document any disclosure (verbal or written) by a survivor that cooperating with child support would pose a risk of harm to themselves or their child(ren) as meeting the requirement for good cause determination.⁴⁴ There is also variation by state and tribe in the amount of time provided for a survivor to provide the documentation and the assistance that staff will provide in gathering information or evidence (for example, contacting police departments).⁴⁵

OCSS recommends that state child support agencies accept and document any disclosure (verbal or written) by a survivor as meeting the requirement for good cause determination.

Patterns at the SAVES Demonstration Sites

CPR reviewed publicly available information, and consulted with demonstration site staff, to outline for each state or tribe:

- Which agency determines good cause⁴⁶
- How eligibility for good cause is defined
- The documentation required to support an application for good cause

Good Cause Determination

For most SAVES demonstration sites, the public assistance agency determines good cause. There are a few sites, however, where the child support agency determines good cause:

³⁹ Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2025). *Good cause exemption for child support cooperation processes, procedures and best practices for public assistance programs (#25-68-18)*. Retrieved from [DCYF Bulletin 25-68-18 Joint Child Support Good Cause Exemption Policy](#).

⁴⁰ Office of Inspector General. (2000). *Client cooperation with child support enforcement: Use of good cause exceptions*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://oig.hhs.gov/reports/all/2000/client-cooperation-with-child-support-enforcement-use-of-good-cause-exceptions/>.

⁴¹ Pearson, J., Griswold, E. A., & Thoennes, N. (2001). Balancing safety and self-sufficiency: Lessons on serving victims of domestic violence for child support and public assistance agencies. *Violence Against Women*, 7(2), 176-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778010122182389>.

⁴² Kaplan, K., Farooqui, S., Clark, J., Dobson, E., Jefferson, R., Kelly, N., Buitrago, K., Drew, K., Lira, A., Williams, M., Neuman, T., & Kim, Y. (2022). Temporary Assistance for Needy Families: Sanctioning and child support compliance among Black families in Illinois. *Health Affairs*, 41(12), 1735-1743. <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00746>.

⁴³ Durrence, A., Doyle, K., & Passi, S. (2021). *Trust survivors: Building an effective and inclusive cash assistance program*. FreeFrom. Retrieved from <https://www.freefrom.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/TrustSurvivorsReport.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Office of Child Support Services. (2025). *Policies to promote safety and economic stability for survivors of domestic violence in the child support program*. Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://acf.gov/css/policy-guidance/policies-promote-safety-and-economic-stability-survivors-domestic-violence>.

⁴⁵ Office of Inspector General. (2000). *Client cooperation with child support enforcement: Use of good cause exceptions*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <https://oig.hhs.gov/reports/all/2000/client-cooperation-with-child-support-enforcement-use-of-good-cause-exceptions/>.

⁴⁶ This information comes from the sites’ OCSS state plan data

- In both **Missouri** and **Ohio**, the child support agency determines good cause for TANF, Medicaid, and foster care
- In **Oklahoma**, the child support agency determines good cause for Medicaid

Eligibility for Good Cause

Among the SAVES demonstration sites, most follow the limited interpretation of good cause as related to experiencing, or risk of experiencing, domestic violence (physical and/or emotional), rape, incest, and adoption. A few sites have additional components:

- **Colorado** also notes “other reasons documented by the county department,” “reasons considered to be in the best interest of the child,” and “other court order”
- **Lac Courte Oreilles’** eligibility focuses broadly on cooperation that would be contrary to the child’s best interest
- **Michigan** distinguishes between two types of good cause: cases in which establishing paternity or securing support would harm the child and cases in which there is danger of physical or emotional harm to the child or client; cases in which there is danger of physical or emotional harm to the child or client may include mental abuse and neglect or deprivation of medical care
- In **Minnesota**, current participants in the Safe at Home program,⁴⁷ a confidential mail forwarding service administered by the Minnesota Secretary of State Office, are automatically eligible for a good cause exemption if they request one
- Both **Ohio** and **Wisconsin** specify that good cause may be appropriate if cooperation with child support will make it more difficult for the CP and/or the child(ren) to escape violence
- **Washington’s** reasons for seeking good cause include having a restraining order or police report filed for the NCP, being concerned about disrupting the child(ren)’s stability, the NCP having a history of mental health or substance abuse issues, and the option to select “other” with space to describe fears and concerns

Most SAVES demonstration sites follow the limited interpretation of good cause as related to experiencing, or risk of experiencing, domestic violence, rape, incest, and adoption.

Documentation to Determine Good Cause

Official Documentation

There are consistent criteria for proving good cause across the SAVES demonstration sites regarding official records or documents showing proof of physical or emotional harm, incest, rape, and/or adoption. These include birth certificates, medical records, law enforcement records, and a statement from an adoption agency.

Statement from Others

Nine sites (**Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin**) allow statements from someone other than the survivor to support a good cause claim without requiring additional documentation. It varies slightly by site, but these are often statements from a friend, family member, clergy, social worker, or medical professional:

- In **Colorado**, counties can use collateral contacts, oral or written confirmations of the household’s circumstances by a person outside of the household, as a source of verification of good cause

⁴⁷ Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. (2025). *Safe at Home*. Retrieved from <https://sos.mn.gov/safe-at-home/>.

- In **Michigan**, if written evidence does not exist, the state assistance worker can document why it is not available and determine if the claim is credible based on available information including collateral contacts with individuals who have direct knowledge of the situation
- In **Georgia, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, and Virginia**, the statement must be sworn
- In **Washington**, the format and/or requirement for a statement is not specified
- In **Wisconsin**, the statement must be signed

Statement from the Survivor

Eight sites (**Colorado, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Oklahoma, Virginia, and Washington**) allow a statement from the survivor themselves without requiring additional documentation. There are differences across these sites in terms of what is allowed:

- In **Colorado**, counties can, in some cases, use a client statement as a source of verification of good cause
- In **Michigan**, if written evidence does not exist, the state assistance worker can document why it is not available and determine if the claim is credible based on available information including client statement
- In **Minnesota**, the survivor can submit a written statement giving their reasons for claiming good cause
- In **Missouri**, an oral statement is accepted in cases of domestic violence
- In **Ohio**, if the reason for claiming good cause is domestic violence and the survivor cannot obtain written documentation, a written statement from the survivor will be accepted
- In **Oklahoma**, a sworn statement from the survivor explaining why continuing with child support poses a safety risk is accepted by the child support or TANF agency to determine a good cause exemption
- In **Virginia**, the TANF agency can accept the survivor's statement, either verbal or written, as evidence for a good cause claim in circumstances where the domestic violence is undocumented
- In **Washington**, the survivor can submit a signed statement outlining their fears and concerns

Eight SAVES demonstration sites allow a statement from the survivor themselves to determine good cause.

Other Documentation

Five sites (**Lac Courte Oreilles, Michigan, Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin**) allow, or require, other forms of documentation:

- **Lac Courte Oreilles** accepts "evidence to support claim that cooperation would be contrary to the best interest of the children"
- In **Michigan**, a documented receipt of domestic violence counseling or of residence in a domestic violence shelter is considered acceptable written evidence
- In **Minnesota**, participation in the Safe at Home (SAH) confidential mail forwarding service, as verified by an identification card or SAH address, is sufficient documentation for a good cause claim; other types of documentation that may be accepted include text messages, emails, photographs, videos, and social media messages
- In **Texas**, receiving a "Family Violence Exemption" from a family violence center is required
- **Wisconsin**, in addition to its other criteria, accepts "any other information that supports your claim"

Assistance With Documentation

Seven sites (**Colorado, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, and Virginia**) note that staff can provide assistance in obtaining documents or evidence.

Determination Without Documentation

Five sites (**Colorado, Georgia, Missouri, New York, and Wisconsin**) specify that the agency may still be able to make a good cause determination if there is no documentation provided.

Conclusion

This brief provides an overview of child support cooperation requirements and good cause exemptions as well as state- or tribal-specific information for the 13 child support programs⁴⁸ participating in the SAVES demonstration.

As part of the SAVES project, some demonstration sites are engaged in ongoing activities to make good cause more responsive to survivors accessing public benefits with child support cooperation requirements. Multiple sites are working to increase collaboration between the child support agency and the TANF agency (for example, with a cross-agency workgroup in **Virginia**) and to better understand existing good cause practices, including how they may vary by county (for example, **Ohio**). Sites are also working to make long-term sustainable changes with policy and statute (for example, **Minnesota**) and to better facilitate their good cause process (for example, with a specialized staffing arrangement in **Washington**). The SAVES Center will build upon this document to highlight site activities, and outcomes, related to cooperation requirements and good cause.

SAVES demonstration sites are working to make good cause more responsive to survivors accessing public benefits with child support cooperation requirements.

Suggested citation: Wildfeuer, R. (2025). *Cooperation and Good Cause*. Center for Policy Research, Denver, Colorado.

Funding for this project was approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Services, Grant Number 90FD0253, awarded to the Colorado Division of Child Support Services. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.



COLORADO
Child Support Services
Department of Human Services

CPR
center for policy research



Centre for Public Impact
Founded by BCG

⁴⁸ Colorado, Georgia, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians (Lac Courte Oreilles), Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin

Appendix A

Sources of publicly available information accessed for each SAVES demonstration site.

Colorado

- Secretary of State of Colorado. (2022). *Income maintenance: Volume 3* (9 CCR 2503-6). Code of Colorado Regulations. Retrieved from <https://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=10321&fileName=9%20CCR%202503-6>.
- State of Colorado Departments of Health Care Policy and Financing and Human Services. (2024). *Application for public assistance*. Retrieved from https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BztoLK7fIWYIVXREYnZKSXhsQmNqSmhTMkdySXFpQTgyTmZn/view?resourcekey=0-LS_RN06c4AXdFaFzARYDVQ.
- Colorado Child Support Services. (2025). *What is good cause for a child support referral*. Department of Human Services. Retrieved from <https://childsupport.state.co.us/sites/default/files/2025-07/What%20is%20good%20cause%20for%20a%20Child%20Support%20Referral.pdf>.

Georgia

- Division of Family and Children Services. (2024). *Notice of requirement to cooperate and right to claim good cause for refusal to cooperate in child support services and third-party liability requirements* (Form 138). Georgia Department of Human Services. Retrieved from <https://pamms.dhs.ga.gov/dfcs/medicaid/2250/#form-138>.

Lac Courte Oreilles

- Lac Courte Oreilles. (2025). *Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) application*. Retrieved from <https://lco-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TANFINTAKEAPPLICATION-fillable.pdf>.
- Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Code of Law. (2025). *Section PAP.15.3.030(a)(4)*. Lac Courte Oreilles Law Library. Retrieved from [https://law.lco-nsn.gov/us/nsn/lco/council/code/PAP.15.3.030#\(a\)\(4\)](https://law.lco-nsn.gov/us/nsn/lco/council/code/PAP.15.3.030#(a)(4)).

Michigan

- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (2024). *Michigan IV-D child support manual*. Retrieved from <https://mdhhs-pres-prod.michigan.gov/ChildSupport/policy/Documents/2.15.pdf>.
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (2025). *Bridges eligibility manual: Child support*. Retrieved from <https://mdhhs-pres-prod.michigan.gov/olmweb/EX/BP/Public/BEM/255.pdf>.
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *Claim of good cause – child support* (DHS-2168). Retrieved from <https://mdhhs-pres-prod.michigan.gov/ChildSupport/policy/Documents/DHS-2168.pdf>.

Minnesota

- Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2016). *Support from non-custodial parents*. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionS_electionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=cm_00122103.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2017). *Child support sanctions*. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionS_electionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=cm_001224.

- Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2021). *Cooperation with child support* (DHS-2338-ENG). Retrieved from <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-2338-ENG>.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2025). *Child support good cause exemptions*. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionS electionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=cm_00122106.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2025). *Cooperation with child support*. Retrieved from https://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionS electionMethod=LatestReleased&dDocName=ccap_0409.
- Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2024). *Medical support*. Retrieved from https://hcopub.dhs.state.mn.us/epm/2_1_1_2_1_3_2.htm.
- Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2025). *Good cause exemption for child support cooperation processes, procedures and best practices for public assistance programs (#25-68-18)*. Retrieved from [DCYF Bulletin 25-68-18 Joint Child Support Good Cause Exemption Policy](#)

Missouri

- Family Support Division. (2008). *Notice of requirement to cooperate and right to claim good cause for refusal to cooperate in child support enforcement* (MO 886-0663). Missouri Department of Social Services. Retrieved from <https://dss.mo.gov/child-support/pdf/child-support-forms.pdf>.
- Family Support Division. (2005). *Second notice of right to claim good cause for refusal to cooperate in child support enforcement* (MO 886-0664). Missouri Department of Social Services. Retrieved from <https://dss.mo.gov/child-support/pdf/child-support-forms.pdf>.

New York

- Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. (2010). *Notice of responsibilities and rights for support* (LDSS-4279). Retrieved from <https://otda.ny.gov/policy/directives/2010/ADM/10-ADM-04-Attachment-7.pdf>.

Ohio

- Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. (2024). *Notice of individuals applying for or participating in Ohio Works First (OWF) regarding cooperation with the Child Support Enforcement Agency (CSEA) (JFS 07092)*. Retrieved from <https://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/num/JFS07092/pdf/>.
- Ohio Administrative Code. (2021). *Requirement to cooperate with the child support enforcement agency* (Rule 5101:12-10-31). Retrieved from <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-5101:12-10-31>.

Oklahoma

- Oklahoma Administrative Code. (2025). *Procedures for determining and processing noncooperation* (340:25-5-114). Retrieved from <https://regulations.justia.com/states/oklahoma/title-340/chapter-25/subchapter-5/part-15/section-340-25-5-114/>.
- Oklahoma Administrative Code. (2025). *Good cause* (340:10-10-6). Retrieved from <https://regulations.justia.com/states/oklahoma/title-340/chapter-10/subchapter-10/section-340-10-10-6/>.
- Oklahoma Human Services. (2021). *Good cause report* (08TA009E). Retrieved from <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/okdhs/documents/searchcenter/okdhsformresults/08ta009e.pdf>.

- Oklahoma Human Services. (2025). *Good cause/family safety option request to stop child support services* (O3EN016E). Retrieved from <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/okdhs/documents/searchcenter/okdhsformresults/O3en016e.pdf>.

Texas

- Texas Health and Human Services. (2018). *Child support and medical support rules and FAQs* (Form H1712). Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/laws-regulations/forms/H1712/H1712.pdf>.
- Office of the Attorney General of Texas. (2025). *Child support and public assistance*. Retrieved from <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/child-support/get-started/child-support-and-public-assistance>.
- Get Child Support Safely. (2017). *What is a good cause exemption?* Office of the Attorney General of Texas. Retrieved from <https://www.getchildsupportsafely.org/stay-safe/what-is-good-cause>.
- Texas Health and Human Services. (2019). *Service plan for Family Violence Option and report of good cause* (Form H1713). Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/regulations/forms/1000-1999/form-h1713-service-plan-family-violence-option-report-good-cause>.

Virginia

- Virginia Department of Social Services. (2025). *TANF manual*. Retrieved from <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit/tanf/manual.cgi>.

Washington

- Economic Services Administration. (2022). *Child support*. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/eligibility-z-manual-ea-z/child-support>.
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. (2022). *Your options for child support collection while receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)* (DSHS 18-334). Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/forms/pdf/18-334.pdf>.
- Economic Services Administration. (2024). *Division of Child Support (DCS) good cause*. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. Retrieved from <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/social-services-manual/division-child-support-dcs-good-cause>.

Wisconsin

- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. (2023). *Child support cooperation & good cause* (DCF-P-5600). Retrieved from <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/5600.pdf>.
- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. (2025). *Cooperating with child support and good cause*. Retrieved from <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cs/benefits-coop-gc>.
- Division of Family and Economic Security. (2023). *Good cause claim* (DCF-F-DWSP2019-E). Department of Children and Families. Retrieved from <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/doc/2019.docx>.