Toolkit: Workforce Programs for Child Support Populations

Tennessee Workforce Strategies and Child Support Services Project

January 2014

Center for Policy Research
Denver Colorado
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This Toolkit was prepared under grant number #90FD0177 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement to the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

Points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of OCSE or Tennessee DHS.
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Introduction

Purpose and Content

This toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to establishing a workforce program for unemployed or underemployed, low-income noncustodial parents (NCPs) in the child support system. It is intended for use by child support agencies interested in developing workforce programs for NCPs who have employment problems and are consequently unable to pay their child support obligations.

This toolkit is divided into sections that address key topics that must be considered when developing a workforce program. They are:

- Program Design and Partners
- The Special Role of the Manager
- Referral, Enrollment, and Retention
- Information Management
- Employment Services
- Child Support Services
- The Role of the Court
- Additional Support Services
- Fatherhood Services
- Co-Parenting Services
- Domestic Violence Considerations
- Evaluating Program Outcomes

Each section presents issues to consider, lessons learned from jurisdictions that have tested these strategies, ideas from other programs, and explanations of how workforce and child support programs have learned to collaborate. Whenever possible, selected materials and resources are presented for those seeking more detailed information.

The Importance of Child Support and Workforce Collaborations

Child support is vitally important for poor families, but low-income, never-married NCPs are least apt to pay; in 2007, only 39.6 percent of never-married parents received all the child support they were due. The barriers to employment and earnings that many unemployed and underemployed NCPs face include:

- Limited education
- Limited work histories
- Mental health and behavioral issues
- Substance abuse
- Lack of transportation
- Criminal backgrounds
- Decline in the manufacturing sector

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1 Grall, 2009.
Movement of jobs out of the inner city

Employment barriers are particularly acute for ex-offenders, who are responsible for nearly 30 percent of state-owed child support arrears.\(^2\) Past incarceration reduces later earnings by 11 percent, cuts annual employment by nine weeks, and reduces yearly earnings by 40 percent.\(^3\)

Employment is clearly a cornerstone of any credible effort to increase child support payments for low-income families. As one professor of social work notes:

> The economic capacity of a father is paramount, given that virtually all nonresidential fathers are expected to assume some financial responsibilities for their children. If a father can be a successful breadwinner, he can more easily be encouraged to become involved in other parental roles such as child raising and decision making.\(^4\)

While there is strong consensus that more money needs to be spent on employment-oriented services for poor NCPs, there is growing sentiment that traditional job placement services may not be sufficient. Child support agencies are being urged to collaborate with employment programs to deliver more effective workforce services. According to ACF, as of September 2011, over 28 states had a workforce and child support program operating in the state. See [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/work-oriented-programs-for-noncustodial-parents-with-active-child-support](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/work-oriented-programs-for-noncustodial-parents-with-active-child-support).

Both child support and workforce programs are being encouraged to partner with other family support services so that the barriers that many poor parents face are addressed in a more comprehensive manner. A comprehensive program would include:

- Employment services to increase fathers’ ability to support themselves and their children economically
- Child support services to review and adjust orders that are too high and/or to reinstate driver’s licenses that have been suspended for non-payment of support
- Co-parenting services to assist parents with the development of parenting plans that specify how the child’s time will be divided between the parents with attention to safety
- Fatherhood services to teach fathers how to engage with their children and support fathers in their employment and parenting roles
- Referrals to a variety of community-based organizations for help with budgeting, housing, transportation, or legal problems

The earliest programs to promote employment and father engagement among low-income NCPs were large-scale, national demonstration projects: Parents’ Fair Share, Partners for Fragile Families, and the OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Programs.\(^5\)

More recently, some states and local jurisdictions have developed employment programs for nonresident fathers in the child support system, the most carefully evaluated of which are Texas’s NCP Choices.\(^6\)

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\(^2\) Pearson & Griswold, 2006.
\(^3\) Pew, 2010.
\(^5\) Martison & Nightingale, 2008.
Employment is clearly a cornerstone of any credible effort to increase child support payments for low-income noncustodial parents.

Colorado’s Parents to Work, and New York’s Strengthening Families through Stronger Families Initiative. The following are some findings on how to serve never-married, low-income NCPs that cut across these studies:

- Recruitment is challenging, so programs should use a variety of referral techniques and sources (including courts) and work with NCPs of all ages and at all stages of case processing to achieve strong enrollment goals.
- Once enrolled, it is challenging to retain NCPs and engage them in program services, so programs should be prepared to provide intensive case management services to realize effective dosages of service delivery.
- In addition to job search and job readiness training, programs should pursue workforce services that are effective with poorly educated NCPs with limited computer skills and criminal backgrounds, including short-term job training, job development, job placement, and retention services.
- Programs should adopt “enhanced” child support policies and services such as suspending child support enforcement during program participation; establishing minimum orders rather than imputing minimum wage; reviewing and adjusting orders to match actual earnings more quickly than is the norm; forgiving some state-owed arrears in exchange for project participation, employment, and child support payment; and/or assisting with driver’s license reinstatement.
- Programs should develop communication systems so that child support staff, workforce personnel, and the court can exchange information about noncustodial parents and monitor their participation.
- Programs should provide assistance with transportation and other practical barriers that impede the ability to work and explore the use of other financial incentives and work supports.
- Programs should strengthen noncustodial parent commitment to workforce programs, legitimate employment, child support payment, and other pro-social and pro-family behaviors by providing opportunities to develop parenting plans, receive training on effective parenting behaviors, and participate in peer support interventions.

Conclusions about the impact of NCP employment programs await the completion of the OCSE-funded Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Project (CSPED), a large-scale, five-year national demonstration of employment programs for unemployed NCPs in eight states that began in September 2012, and uses random assignment techniques. However, preliminary findings from some site-specific studies are promising:

- Texas’s NCP Choices program found employment impacts in the treatment group of 21 percent even after a year, and relative to the comparison group, NCPs paid their child support 47 percent more often and paid $57 more per month, for a 51 percent increase in total collections.

7 Pearson, Davis & Venohr, 2011
8 Lippold & Sorensen, October 2011.
9 Schroeder & Doughty, 2009.
Colorado’s Parents to Work program found that relative to the comparison group, participants had significantly higher rates of earnings, less economic decline due to the 2008/2009 economic recession, and that the percentage of child support due that was paid increased significantly from 36.6 to 41.3 percent in the treatment group, but was unchanged in the comparison group (28.2% versus 27.5%).

Participants in the employment programs offered in the New York Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative earned 22 percent more and paid 38 percent more in child support than did a comparable group of fathers who did not receive the intervention.

Colorado’s Parents to Work program resulted in better employment and earning outcomes for the treatment group that translated into improvements in the amount and regularity of child support that was paid (41.3% of what was owed for treatment group versus 27.5% for the comparison group), as well as generating substantial additional regional earnings and sales/revenue.

Although there is strong preliminary evidence that it makes sense to try to strengthen employment outcomes for parents in the child support system who fail to pay support because they are unemployed or underemployed, child support agencies have not been allowed to spend program funds on workforce activities. Positive outcomes in the OCSE-funded CSPED projects that are currently underway in eight states may change that. In future years, child support agencies are expected to be able to invest in workforce services. This toolkit will help child support agencies engage in the planning and program organization activities needed to create effective services that will translate into strong employment outcomes and child support payments.

**Recommended Reading**


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10 Pearson, Davis & Venohr, 2011.
Program Design and Partners

Determining the Key Elements of Your Program

Clarifying the goals of your program will help you decide what partner agencies should be involved. What are the key goals? What are the needs of the population that has been targeted? What will it take to achieve the program’s goals?

- **Clarify the primary objectives of the program**
  - Is the program meant to increase short-term child support collections?
  - Is the purpose to improve the regularity and amount of child support payments over time?
  - Is reducing expenditures for public assistance and other benefit programs a goal?
  - Is the program intended to increase the chance of NCPs getting a job that pays a livable wage and/or one with wage growth?

- **Involve partners in planning and performance**
  - Who has resources to contribute to the program?
  - Who will be enthusiastic about the program’s goals?
  - Who might oppose it if they are not engaged at an early stage?
  - Have you identified all the agency partners and key staff who need to approve participation?

- **Identify needs and gaps in existing services for NCPs**
  - Without adequate case management, child support clients may not understand or may misunderstand the status of their case(s), what is required of them, the enforcement process, and what the agency can offer if they participate in a workforce program.
  - Child support clients might be unable to access self-service resources at the workforce center and may need more basic help with job search and job training, as well as help with transportation, clothing for interviews, or work tools.
  - Other client needs may lie outside of child support or workforce programs: a place to live, a phone to use in the job search process, computer access, transportation, legal help with cases unrelated to child support, or a chance to gain regular access to their children.
  - Child support clients who have criminal records may need help with rap sheet scrubbing, special counseling on how to handle their past in employment applications and interviews, and referrals to felon-friendly employers.

- **Consider the local economy and opportunities/challenges for NCPs**
  - No program can control the economic climate in which the program will operate. However, it is possible to research the types of jobs that are likely to be plentiful, the skills they require, and the employers that are likely to be receptive to working with child support populations, including low-skilled workers with limited work experience and criminal histories.
Develop seamless recruitment and enrollment strategies

Recruitment will be dealt with in greater detail below. However, the best way to reduce participant attrition is to develop a one-stop approach to recruitment, enrollment, and service delivery. NCPs who are sent from agency to agency are more apt to be “lost” along the way. Rapidly engaging NCPs in workforce services helps to ensure that those who express an interest in getting help follow through and are served.

Create effective, customized workforce services for NCPs

Although there may be strong workforce programs in the community, it will probably take more than a simple referral to ensure that NCPs participate in them. The NCP needs a plan that clearly spells out what he is to do and a timeline for doing it. Employment specialists who work with the NCP need to know what the plan calls for and be very “hands on” and proactive in engaging and providing services. Many low-income NCPs cannot access services at a workforce agency or search for a job independently.

Have a plan to locate employers willing to hire unskilled NCPs with criminal histories

Successful employment programs usually have spent time “courting” employers who may be sympathetic to hiring noncustodial parents who lack work skills, have sporadic work histories, and are burdened with criminal records. It may require extra monitoring and support following employment to ensure that the newly placed worker succeeds and that the employer is satisfied.

Use the court to enroll NCPs and monitor performance

Child support judges and hearing officers can play a critical role in program enrollment and participation. In some programs, such as Texas NCP Choices, judicial personnel who hear child support matters can order delinquent NCPs to participate in a workforce program if they are unable to pay child support and do not wish to face incarceration (“pay, play, or pay the consequences”). Review hearings are mechanisms that judges in many jurisdictions use to monitor program participation and ensure NCP compliance. Judges can also encourage NCPs to participate in programs by offering positive incentives. For example, in a pilot workforce project in Massachusetts, the judge ordered a minimum child support order for unemployed NCPs who agreed to participate in the program and higher orders keyed to the minimum wage for those who refused to participate.

Enter data on client and services receipt carefully and consistently

Ultimately, the future of your program may rest on your ability to provide evidence that it is effective. In an age of evidence-based programs, you will need more than case studies to demonstrate that participants find and keep jobs. From the outset, it is important to identify the information you need to collect and establish procedures to ensure that it is collected in a reliable and consistent manner.

Identifying and Engaging Key Partners

Creating a program that will provide NCPs from the child support agency with a meaningful chance of employment will require the cooperation of many different agencies. To have them participate in a meaningful way, they need to be part of the planning process.
Tip: Involve Key Agency Partners in the Planning Process

Key community agencies that should be at the table will vary from site to site, but often include representatives from:

- State Department of Human Services, Child Support Division
- Local child support agencies, including representatives from units likely to interact with unemployed NCPs, such as workers engaged in order establishment, order enforcement, and customer service
- State Department of Labor and Employment
- Local Workforce programs
- One-stop employment programs
- Courts that hear child support matters
- Short-term job training providers such as Goodwill Industries
- Community or vocational college programs
- Employer groups that might hire NCPs
- Parenting-time mediators and facilitators affiliated with court or community-based programs
- Fatherhood program providers
- Re-entry programs
- Domestic violence/batterer services
- Other public and community-based organizations that help with housing, food, public benefits, and support services

Tip: Aim for Early Engagement

It is important to begin working with potential partners early in the process of developing a collaborative program. They will each have constraints on what they can provide. If they are not at the table to share these constraints, it is easy to make erroneous assumptions about what services you can count on receiving for the NCPs in the program.

Similarly, you may be unaware of what these agencies have to offer until you hear from them. They may have funding from other sources that can be used to offset some program costs. They may be planning or conducting pilot programs that would be a good fit for your NCPs and/or permit co-enrollment.

Early engagement also means that you can create partnerships with real collaboration, commitment, and joint ownership. Approaching an agency about providing services after the program is up and running will usually be a less effective means of gaining real “buy in.”
Staffing the Program

The staffing arrangement you adopt will depend in part on whether the program operates exclusively out of one agency, such as the child support agency, or whether there are partner agencies that are sufficiently involved to warrant either dedicated staff or workers assigned as liaisons to the program.

The program needs to be led by a high-ranking individual within the host agency. This conveys agency commitment and provides some measure of program visibility and accountability.

On a daily level, it helps to have an administrator who is familiar with the details of program operation. This administrator should have the authority to convene meetings of the partners to address systemic problems, make decisions in individual cases, and supervise staff who provide direct services to participants. Project staff must be committed to and experienced with working with hard-to-serve populations that face multiple challenges to employment and varying levels of motivation. The following is a sample job description for an individual who would serve as a case manager.\(^\text{11}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case manager to work with child support clients who need assistance in preparing for, finding, and maintaining employment</td>
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<tr>
<th>Education and/or Experience</th>
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<tr>
<td>Degree preferred in a human behavioral related field or public administration field</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case management experience preferred, including knowledge in motivational interviewing and strengths-based case management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge and experience on government assistance programs and regulations a plus</td>
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<th>General Skills</th>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility and ability to adapt to changing needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfortable with MS Office applications such as Word, Outlook, Excel, PowerPoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to use databases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexible schedule and willingness to do occasional evening or weekend work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilingual in Spanish is a plus</td>
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<th>Special Skills and Knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fundamental ability to understand, accept, and work with diverse people who experience barriers while at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about the community and community programs, ability to network, or have an established network with community non-profits and government assistance programs, knowledge of non-profit operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experience working with private industry, business, and employers</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Duties and Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide counseling and support to clients</td>
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<tr>
<td>Record, update, maintain client service files, database and records close to real time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage with public partners and facilitate direct service payments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach to community and marketing of program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain confidentiality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain consistent communication with employers and employees</td>
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<table>
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<td>Benefits</td>
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\(^\text{11}\) Adapted from WorkLife Partnership in Colorado.
Child Support Staffing Lessons

- Select energetic and caring staff
- Accept referrals from child support workers at all stages of case processing
- Be at court during the contempt calendar and other child support dockets to recruit participants and report on their progress
- Review eligibility to ensure that the right NCPs are being enrolled
- Explain the benefits of the program
- Monitor recruitment and attrition
- Assess child support needs of project participants
- Arrange for delivery of enhanced child support services, either by having project staff handle cases on their own or coordinating with the child support worker of record
- Refer participants to orientation/assessment with designated workforce staff members
- Refer project participants to relevant public and community-based programs and services
- Engage in proactive case management and outreach activities with project participants
- Screen for domestic violence and make appropriate referrals

Workforce Staffing Lessons

- Select energetic and caring staff
- Coordinate with dedicated child support staff recruiting unemployed NCPs for program participation
- Provide an intensive workforce intervention with NCP participants
- Provide regular orientation/assessment sessions for program enrollees
- Jointly provide case management and workforce services
- Closely monitor client participation and attrition in workforce services
- Coordinate with other personnel at the workforce center for delivery of other services
- Cultivate relationships with area employers
- Monitor participant job search activities and outcomes
- Provide job retention services for participants who become employed
- Offer bus tokens and work supplies as appropriate
- Coordinate with and leverage other workforce center resources and staff, including job developers who identify employers and job opportunities
The Special Role of the Case Manager

The case manager plays a critical role in an effective employment program for noncustodial parents. He or she is the point person for program referrals and for interactions with those who enroll. Outlined below are some of the roles that this individual will play and ways to enhance program success.

Building Relationships and Maintaining Contact

Effective case management is the key to obtaining sufficient numbers of program participants, retaining those who enroll, and providing services at dosages that are effective. Potential participants are likely to be suspicious of a program based at the child support agency if they have child support arrears or they feel they cannot afford to pay their current child support obligation. In addition, potential participants who have little or no contact with their children may feel that they have no reason to take part in the services that the program offers.

The case manager needs to initiate contact with potential participants as well as those who enroll. After these initial interactions, the case manager needs to continue to outreach to participants to engage them and encourage service delivery. The case manager should be prepared to help enrollees who have been given referrals to make contact with the referral agency. Experience shows that simply giving the enrollee a name and phone number to seek further help frequently results in no further contact.

Case managers have the complicated job of being a support person, an advisor, a supervisor, and a monitor. The following are ways to try to build a relationship and maintain contact with project participants.

- Quickly schedule NCPs to participate in relevant workforce activities after the assessment process
- Obtain contact information for the NCP (including a secondary contact number) and review it for accuracy each time you talk or meet
- Provide the NCP with your cell number or direct office number so that he has ready access to you
- Maintain frequent (e.g., weekly) telephone and in-person contact
- Establish a fixed meeting time and place
- Consider meeting outside the office in a more informal and “human” setting
- Ask questions, listen to participants, show interest in their circumstances, empathize, and reassure
- Tell participants about yourself so that you can build a relationship
- Adopt a position of concern and avoid making judgments

Case Management at Child Support

Another duty of the case manager at the child support agency is to try to ensure that child support does not discourage participants from seeking and obtaining a job. To do this, it helps to make sure that project participants understand their child support status, that their obligations reflect an ability to pay, and that child
support policies incentivize employment and regular payment of support. Some child support activities that support these outcomes include:

- Providing dedicated workers to meet with project participants and explain their obligations and options
- Assisting participants with establishing orders that reflect actual earnings and an ability to pay
- Helping to review existing orders and modify them (if appropriate) using expedited procedures
- Staying enforcement actions while the participant is actively engaged in the project and looking for a job
- Compromising state-owed arrears in exchange for employment and regular payment of support

**Case Management at the Workforce Center**

The key to a successful program is engaging project participants in effective job-focused services. Many NCPs who enroll in workforce programs disappear after the enrollment process or participate at very modest levels. For example, of the 600 NCPs who enrolled in Colorado’s Parents to Work project, 31 percent enrolled but did not engage in any services and another 23 percent participated in only one or two services. The remaining 46 percent were involved in a more wholehearted manner and participated in three or more workforce activities. Rates of employment and child support payment were significantly higher for those who fully participated compared with those who dropped out and/or participated partially. Some relevant case management activities at the workforce center that help to increase participation are to:

- Provide a designated case manager to meet with NCPs, assess their needs, and track their progress
- Engage NCPs quickly so that they do not disappear after the enrollment process
- Communicate regularly with the child support case manager about participant engagement and attrition
- Identify and address barriers to participation including transportation by using bus passes and gas cards
- Provide customized treatments, extra support, and help with applications, forms, and computer searches
- Develop concrete action items at every meeting, review them, and revise to reflect changes in situation
- Provide feedback, incentivize and celebrate small milestones, and hold participants accountable for failures

**Case Management Lessons**

- Co-locate workforce and child support staff and/or arrange for frequent meetings between designated personnel at both agencies
- Provide ongoing employment counseling during job readiness training, employability planning, and placement activities
- Conduct regular intensive job clubs and supervised job search activities for participants
- Engage in proactive outreach activities with participants, including reminder calls and other actions to re-engage participants when attendance lapses
- Provide practical help with using a computer, résumé writing, and interviewing skills
- Monitor meaningful participation in job search and interviewing activities
- Cultivate sympathetic employers and provide job leads to suitable employment opportunities
- Assess work readiness factors such as punctuality, personal presentation, and cooperation
- Develop an individualized job strategy with each participant, monitor progress, and revise as needed
- Link participants to transportation, clothing work tools and other services
- Provide cash bonuses, gift cards, or other incentives for achieving employment milestones
Communication Among the Partners

Communication among partner agencies is a priority in an effective workforce and child support collaboration. Project staff must be in routine contact about NCP referrals, participation, and progress. They need to be aware of referrals made for various types of services so that they can determine if service needs have been met. If the court is involved in the referral, the judicial officer will need periodic reports on client participation at scheduled review hearings. And once a participant becomes employed, the child support agency will need to initiate an appropriate wage withholding order.

To maximize effective communication, your program should consider the following:

- Developing a communication plan for program staff and partner agencies
- Using a web-based case management information system that allows case managers in multiple programs and/or sites to enter and review information about project participants
- Having the designated project case managers at the child support and workforce agencies serve as liaisons to other relevant community agencies and programs that provide services dealing with housing, food, parenting time, etc. to facilitate communication
- Having program participants sign a consent form allowing information to be shared with community agencies as part of the enrollment process.

Effective Communication Lessons:

- Hold weekly or biweekly staff/status meetings with case managers in child support and the workforce program to discuss the status of NCP referrals, enrollments, and participation activities
- Stay informed about where each NCP is in the “pipeline” (e.g., referred, enrolled, participating, dropped out) and take appropriate actions promptly
- Develop a web-based system to track enrollment, referrals, and participation in services
- Ensure that key program staff have access to the web-based system and are accountable for regularly entering information into the system
- Hold periodic project meetings with key partner agencies and relevant staff
- Share success stories to keep partner agencies engaged and making referrals of suitable participants
- Generate and review quarterly reports that track key program metrics such as referrals, enrollments, participation levels, dropouts, and any outcomes that are available regarding employment and child support payment
Referral, Enrollment, and Retention

Target Populations

Collaborative programs for child support and workforce agencies usually try to enroll low-income NCPs who fail to meet their child support obligations because they are unemployed or underemployed. The following are eligibility criteria that other workforce programs for NCPs have used.

- Texas’s NCP Choices targets nonpaying NCPs with open child support cases that involve current or past receipt of public assistance.
- Colorado’s Parents to Work program targeted NCPs who were U.S. citizens or had obtained legal residency and had a verified Colorado address, who had at least one open child support case with an established order that was less than $1,500 per month, were unemployed or underemployed and paid less than 66 percent of the child support they owed, and did not have a physical or mental disability or a substance abuse problem that limited their ability to work. Based on past experience, Arapahoe/Douglas Workforce Center recommends that programs exclude: NCPs who are at the front end of receiving unemployment insurance benefits, NCPs convicted of a sex offense, and/or NCPs who are engaged in drug or alcohol treatment.
- OCSE’s CSPED programs focus on NCPs who have established paternity, are in the child support program, and are either not paying child support or are expected to have trouble making regular child support payments because they are not regularly employed. In addition, OCSE recommends that NCPs have a valid Social Security number; have an address that is near the employment services provided through the project; have at least one open, non-interstate IV-D case that has a current support order; be unemployed or underemployed and not making full current support payments; and be medically able to work.

Some programs change their eligibility criteria because the restrictions make it difficult for them to generate a sufficient number of project participants.

- Initially, the Massachusetts Parent Support Project focused on unemployed or underemployed NCPs who were new to the child support program and were engaged in the process of establishing a child support order. Over time, the enrollment criteria were expanded to include NCPs at all stages of case processing since the focus on those at the earliest stage of case processing was too restrictive.
- The Partners for Fragile Families Project focused on young NCPs who were new to the child support program. Ultimately, the Project enrolled only 883 participants and far fewer had reported outcomes because the restrictions on participant age and case stage proved to be too limiting.
- Family Ties, a Tennessee prisoner reentry project that offered help with employment and child support, initially focused on serving newly released offenders but was expanded in favor of serving all interested ex-offenders in both pre- and post-release settings.

Other groups in the child support caseload that have been targeted for inclusion in workforce programs are:

- NCPs who are veterans
- Disabled NCPs
- Formerly incarcerated NCPs
- Newly unemployed NCPs
Generating Referrals

Once a decision has been made about the requirements for participating in a child support-workforce program, the planning group needs to decide how to identify these individuals and contact them about enrolling. Unless the program is restricted to NCPs who are delinquent in their child support payments and are ordered by the court to participate, it will be necessary to develop posters, brochures, or other materials that explain the program in a simple, straightforward manner. Written materials are more effective if they are accompanied by an in-person effort to explain the program and elicit participation. Child support workers are in an excellent position to identify NCPs who are “willing” to pay child support, but are “unable” due to insufficient employment activity. The following are ways to generate referrals from child support workers:

- Attend team and office-wide meetings at the child support agency and pitch the project to all relevant child support workers in the establishment, modification, enforcement, and customer service divisions.
- Keep the project visible to child support workers through regular presentations and emails.
- Invite workforce staff and other project partners to attend occasional meetings with child support staff to answer questions and build support for referral efforts.
- Circulate a project flier to child support workers so they have copies to distribute to NCPs.
- Make the referral process easy, but make sure that workers send project personnel full contact information for the interested NCP.
- Publicize success stories and give workers feedback on the outcomes of their referrals.
- Keep track of referral activity by workers so that you know who is making referrals and who is not.
- Consider using contests and incentives to generate referrals such as gift cards, food parties, and “dress-down” days.
- Emphasize the potential for project participation to increase child support performance and be a positive for the worker.

While child support workers are the best source of referrals for NCP employment programs, program architects should consider other sources, too.

- Work with fatherhood programs to publicize the employment programs and obtain referrals.
- Attend contempt calendars and other child support court hearings, and be available to talk with child support attorneys, judges, and interested NCPs about the project.
- Collaborate with the Department of Corrections, parole offices, reentry programs, and other agencies and organizations that work with paroled and released offenders.
- Publicize the program at Head Start and other early childhood programs, community-based organizations that serve low-income families, and work support programs that offer assistance with food, housing, and other basic services.
- Cultivate word-of-mouth referrals and welcome enrollees who come to the program because they have heard about it from other participants.
Referral Lessons

- Pursue multiple sources of referrals. Although the child support agency will likely be the main source of program participants, it will not be the only source. Conduct outreach to local fatherhood programs, workforce centers, and other community-based organizations to reach your target population and generate an adequate number of program participants.

- Establish broad eligibility requirements and avoid limiting participation to NCPs in a narrow age range or a single stage of case processing at the child support agency.

- Use one-stop approaches, if possible. NCPs face many barriers to participation, including lack of transportation. Co-locating all case managers at the child support office, including workforce staff, helps ensure maximum NCP participation and retention.

- Generate referrals at the child support agency. Conduct outreach to child support workers, track referrals by worker, provide feedback to those who make referrals, and encourage those who do not to try the program. Consider using incentives and worker referral quotas. Train workers on the criteria for enrollment, and develop simple pre-screening tools and enrollment procedures. Monitor the numbers of appropriate referrals you get by source, and provide feedback to referring workers.

- Generate referrals from judges and other court personnel. Explore whether the court will require unemployed NCPs in contempt hearings to enroll in workforce services. Place project staff in court during the contempt calendar. Provide on-the-spot information about the project, and schedule NCP to meet with workforce staff. Provide feedback to the court on NCP participation at review hearings.

- Generate referrals from community sources. Identify a few community entities to assist with referral (Department of Corrections, responsible fatherhood programs, veterans’ services). Develop streamlined referral arrangements. Provide periodic feedback to keep referrals up.

Effective Enrollment

The actual enrollment process with each participant should include:

- An explanation of what the program offers and will require
- An assessment to determine that the NCP is committed to working and paying child support
- An assessment to determine what services and programs will be useful to achieve employment
- Collecting demographic and attitudinal information that may be helpful in evaluating the program in general or determining the types of clients who are most and least successful
- Obtaining informed consent
- Collecting contact information, including contact information for friends and relatives who may be able to help if the participant falls out of contact

Tip: Making a referral is the beginning, not the end, of case management
**Enrollment Lessons**

- Make enrollment passive and/or straightforward using techniques available at your agency
- Co-locate workforce and child support staff
- Engage participants by having them quickly meet with workforce personnel for screening, assessment, and service delivery
- Provide NCPs with an in-person orientation in either a one-on-one or group format
- Emphasize the key outcomes of employment and child support payment
- Explain program requirements, including set meeting times, days of meeting and hours, required job search activities, intensive case management, classes, and other project interventions that will take time and effort
- Describe the benefits of participation, including access to dedicated staff at the child support and workforce agencies, more personal attention and help, and any other project features including child support relief, incentives, opportunities for help with parenting time, peer support, and referrals to other public programs
- Consider checking the child support payment and earnings history for potential participants to determine whether they paid child support when they were employed and had an ability to pay
- Carefully track recruitment, enrollment, and retention; review these patterns with project partners; and discuss ways to improve them.

**Effective Retention**

Retaining clients requires frequent contact with them, contact with the partner agencies that are helping to serve project participants, and clear communication with NCPs to let them know what is required of them and to learn of the unmet needs they still have.

- Obtain contact information for the NCP (including a secondary contact number) and review it for accuracy each time you talk or meet
- Provide the NCP with your cell number or direct office number so that he/she has ready access to you
- Maintain frequent (e.g., weekly) telephone and in-person contact
- Consider placing reminder calls before scheduled meetings and appointments
- Establish a fixed meeting time and place
- Check on transportation arrangements and needs, and provide gas cards and bus tokens, if needed
- Ask questions, listen to participants, show interest in their circumstances, empathize, and reassure
- Adopt a position of concern and avoid making judgments
- Be willing to repeat your explanations of the project, the child support system, the workforce system, and other matters that seem confusing
- Avoid overwhelming the NCP with too much information or too many action items at one time
- Review and adjust action items every time you meet to reflect updates and changes in his/her situation
- Check on whether he/she has followed up with referrals
- Ask for feedback on the dignity, utility, and effectiveness of the service referrals you make
- Follow through with what you say you will do and explain and/or apologize when you cannot
Information Management

There are a number of reasons to maintain information about the program and about those who enroll. The primary reasons include collecting information:

- For case management
- To assess how well the program is operating
- To determine how well the program is meeting its goal

Collecting Data for Case Management

It is important for case managers and other program staff to keep a record of participants’ program activities. This includes activities that are scheduled and attended as well as those that are missed. Keeping a record of contacts and services received by participants helps program staff assess levels of participation and rates of appearance and attrition, and to make appropriate adjustments in service delivery. Once this system of record keeping is in place, it needs to be shared among program partners. Effective case management includes communicating with participants about upcoming or missed appointments and their participation status. Without a tool to track and record this information, it will be impossible to effectively communicate with participants about their level of participation and hold them accountable for non-participation.

There many methods to capture this type of participation data and share it among partner agencies. Some agencies use a spreadsheet to keep track of appointments scheduled and attended, telephone contact, and appearance at workshops and other program activities. A paper form, similar to the one used in Arapahoe County’s Parents to Work program can be an inexpensive and effective tool to capture participation in job search activities. An online system like the one developed for the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) is a good example of an online, web-based system that allows scheduling, tracking, and sharing information between case managers and partners online via a secure login in real time.
Collecting Data for Program Evaluation

A program evaluation will require additional data to be collected beyond the data collected for normal program intake and tracking purposes. This typically involves engaging an experienced evaluator to augment a case tracking system so that sufficient data is collected to answer important research questions and report on program outcomes. When collecting additional data that will be shared with evaluators, program staff must ensure that participants are informed about the research effort and agree to participate. At intake, program staff should notify project participants of the research being conducted and obtain signed consent from them that allows case information to be shared with partner agencies and the evaluator.

The Parent Support Program in Tennessee obtained informed consent using the following instrument:

![Consent To Participate Procedures](image-url)
Additional data may be required for an evaluation.

- In-depth telephone interviews with participants may be conducted six or more months following program enrollment to assess user reactions and program impacts.
- Focus groups with participants help program architects and evaluators learn more about the effectiveness of various program components, recommendations for program improvement, and unexpected outcomes.
- Automated extracts of data on project participants generated from state-level systems—including quarterly wage reports from the Department of Labor and Employment, child support payment information from the Department of Human Services, and recidivism information from the Department of Corrections—provide reliable, hard evidence of key program outcomes.

“Guidebook to the Responsible Fatherhood Project Participant Management Information System” (RFMIS) is a tool developed to help fatherhood programs manage and assess their programs by maintaining information on the services needed and delivered to fathers in their programs. The system allows programs to track the progress of individual fathers and to aggregate data on program participants for reporting purposes. The RFMIS is available for use as a paper-and-pencil tracking system or an electronic database that can be downloaded into any computer system that uses Microsoft Access:

http://fatherhood.hhs.gov/Development/guidebook03/

**Methods of Data Collection**

- Utilize existing data collection tools including workforce tools and data systems that exist at each partner agency.
- Create data collection forms to be filled out at program intake and at milestones during program participation, such as three and six months post-enrollment.

**Sample Data System**

NCP Choices, an employment program for noncustodial parents conducted by the Child Support Division of the Texas Office of the Attorney General, the Texas Workforce Commission and the courts, developed an online management information system to track participant enrollment and outcomes. The Choices On Line Tracking System (COLTS) allows partner agencies at child support, the workforce agency, the court and other project partners to access and enter participant information remotely from their respective workspaces. Authors of COLTS define the system as “a web-based tool used to store and display data regarding NCP Choices participants. The online system is a single point of entry used by multiple agencies to track noncustodial parents’ program participation and share compliance status. COLTS resides on the Child Support Portal (also known as the portal and TXCSES Web).”

Some key features of the COLTS system are that it is:

- Live - COLTS instantly updates when users add or edit information
- Secure – NCPs’ private information is protected
- Traceable – historical data is captured rather than overwritten
- Comprehensive – minimum data entry requirements are standard across all sites
- Accessible – data can be viewed by authorized users from computers with web access
The COLTS menu bar has links to:

- Site Summary – see a summary of participants’ program status, manage records using filters
- SSN Search – locate existing records or initiate the creation of a new record
- Reports – find monthly statewide reports (available as Excel files)
- Resources – view commonly used program documents, videos, and guides

The COLTS menu bar for portal and COLTS

THE THREE C’S OF COLTS DATA ENTRY: Current, Correct, Concise

COLTS facilitates communication between NCP Choices program partners and safeguards NCP Choices participants’ personal information. COLTS users are responsible for ensuring that the data and comments on COLTS are current, correct, and concise.

The following outlines the minimum data entry requirements for COLTS users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHILD SUPPORT FIELD OFFICE</th>
<th>WORKFORCE LIAISON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AT ENTRY</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Verify that the NCP’s SSN is correct</td>
<td>Create record within three days of court order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Confirm that the NCP was court ordered to participate – set Member Flag to “Open”</td>
<td>- Date ordered in, NCP’s SSN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Select the appropriate Trigger ID (case ID associated with the court order)</td>
<td>- NCP’s contact information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Check the Order Type against TXCSES</td>
<td>- Select the CS field office and site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Completed (authorization) Release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mark Order Type as “EST” or “ENF”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DURING PROGRAM</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update any time that:</td>
<td>Log participation information:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- An auto-notification is received</td>
<td>- First workforce appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Legal action is taken (i.e., court hearing date, issuance of a capias)</td>
<td>- Participation – complying, not complying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Case information is available (i.e., administrative program removal, incarceration)</td>
<td>- Employment information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AT TERMINATION</td>
<td>Employment retention status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Make a notation on COLTS and TXCSES indicating successful completion or court-ordered removal from the program.</td>
<td>Enter a date in Date Services Terminated:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Meets program requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Removed from the program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Employment Services

The development of effective employment-focused services is the key to the success of the program. During the planning process, explore with all key partner agencies innovative approaches to serving noncustodial parents utilizing existing workforce programs as well new approaches. For more information on developing employment programs for hard to serve populations, see Mathematica’s “Reaching All Job Seekers: Employment Programs for Hard-to-Employ Populations,” available at http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/PDFs/hdemploy.pdf.

Innovative and effective employment-focused services should:

- Provide intensive interventions with dedicated and resourceful staff
- Provide case management and relationship building with workforce staff
- Provide practical job-readiness help with using a computer, résumé writing, and interviewing skills
- Provide job development activities with local employers that the workforce staff has cultivated
- Provide job leads to employers willing to hire NCPs with “barriers”
- Provide peer support, such as supervised job clubs
- Monitor NCP participation and attrition
- Communicate with CSE staff about the participation level of NCPs
- Monitor employment outcomes, wages, and hiring status
- Notify CSE for immediate wage withholding when an NCP becomes employed
- Provide job retention services and rapid re-employment services
- Provide incentives for keeping a job (gift card if employed at three, six, nine, 12 months, etc.)
- Refer to other services for fatherhood, parenting time, benefit programs, etc.

Project participants will require different types of employment services depending upon their education level, life skills, and work experience.

Work Readiness

These skills are sometimes referred to as “soft employment skills.” The United States Department of Labor lists the following as valuable soft skills that employees need to compete in the marketplace:

- Soft Skill #1: communication
- Soft Skill #2: enthusiasm & attitude
- Soft Skill #3: teamwork
- Soft Skill #4: networking
- Soft Skill #5: problem solving and critical thinking
- Soft Skill #6: professionalism

12 The accompanying examples are excerpts from http://www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/softskills/.
Job Search

An effective job search starts with assistance from the case manager. The most effective programs provide participants with one-on-one support. Case managers can help participants set goals and develop effective résumés and cover letters. They also help NCPs identify jobs and employers that are a good fit given their work history, education, experience, and interests.

The United States Department of Labor offers the following: Strategies for an Effective Job Search\(^\text{13}\)

- Set personal goals
- Get organized
- Plan an effective job search
- Fill out job application forms and take employment tests
- Write effective résumés
- Write effective cover letters

Short-Term Training Opportunities

The key partner organizations in your planning process should be familiar with organizations that provide education and job training in your area that might serve your target population. Issues that the planning group should address include:

- Identifying existing short-term training programs in your area
- Identifying current educational opportunities that may exist to help educate your target population
- Discussing a screening and referral process for sending NCPs to training
- Outlining potential opportunities to explore within the community that may exist but that key partners are not aware of currently
- Linking participants to ABE, ESL, GED, or college when needed or appropriate
- Looking for On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities
- Considering internships
- Paying fees for training programs in emerging industries
- Offering retention services and support to participants who begin a training or OJT program, and try to identify and resolve issues before they result in resignation or termination
- Providing employment and job-retention incentive payments

Job Development

Effective job development is integral to achieving the goals of workforce-child support collaborations. Finding jobs for hard-to-place populations is challenging. High unemployment and local economic factors can make the job especially difficult. The following are effective job development strategies for working with the hardest to employ. They were developed by the National Transitional Jobs Network.

\(^{13}\) Excerpts from Department of Labor http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/tap3_4.pdf.
Devote adequate staffing resources and support for job development. Hire job development professionals and give them a manageable caseload size. Caseload size is correlated with a program’s employment effectiveness.

Hire job developers with strong skills. Successful job developers have strong skills in sales and networking. Prior experience working with employers is also very helpful. Utilize appropriate professional development opportunities including trainings, conferences or workshops.

Use labor-market information to target sectors that hire entry-level workers such as NCPs. It is important to know what industry sectors are hiring entry-level workers locally. Information on employment projections and job openings is provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (http://www.bls.gov). Local or regional economic authorities also have data on labor market demand for particular industries and occupations. O*Net Online provides job descriptions and skills, knowledge, and training necessary for each occupation: (http://online.onecenter.org).

Use employer-recognized assessment tools to measure and document work readiness. Ongoing assessments can measure and document work readiness such as punctuality, personal presentation, and cooperation with coworkers and supervisors. This information can help job development staff match participants with positions and convince employers to hire.

Cultivate and engage employers who are most likely to hire noncustodial parents. Effective strategies include talking and listening to potential employers to understand their immediate and future needs. Build relationships with employers to create long-term partnerships and placements that serve both project participants and employers.

Target the right employers. Small and medium-sized employers and locally owned companies may be more receptive to hiring noncustodial parents because they have fewer hiring restrictions and less bureaucracy, and may be more receptive to the social benefits of hiring unemployed parents who have child support obligations.

Network with and engage potential employers. To effectively network and engage employers, job developers should join and participate in organizations that allow access and interaction with local employers such as local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary, or trade associations. It is also helpful to attend local job fairs to distribute brochures about the program and the job developer. Research potential employers and know what skills are important for employees to have.

Determine how to market program participants to employers. Use positive language like “challenges” instead of “barriers” to describe noncustodial parents.

Describe any incentives that businesses may realize by hiring NCPs. Employers may be eligible for payroll tax credits for hiring NCPs. They may qualify for bonding through the Federal Bonding Program for “at-risk” employees, including people with criminal records, at no cost to the employer. Fidelity bonding protects employers against theft, forgery, larceny, and embezzlement. (http://www.bonds4jobs.com).

Describe the ongoing retention services you will provide. In 2009, businesses experienced an average employee turnover rate of approximately 16 percent. Turnover is particularly high among entry-level workers. A program that provides retention services at no cost to employers offers the possibility of improving long-term employment retention and reducing turnover costs.

For more information on effective job development activities for hard-to-serve populations, see the National Transitional Jobs Network (http://www.heartlandalliance.org/ntjn/). For one- and three-day training
For more information on effective job development activities for hard-to-serve populations, see the National Transitional Jobs Network (http://www.heartlandalliance.org/ntjn/). For one- and three-day training programs on job development, contact Employment Management Professionals Inc. (www.dtg-emp.com/). A brochure providing more information on the fundamentals of job development, Employment Outcomes Fundamentals, can be found at http://www.dtg-emp.com/media/workshops/pdfs/EOFBrochure-rev1.pdf.

**Transitional Jobs**

Transitional jobs, sometimes called subsidized employment, provide a benefit to workforce and child support programs by providing immediate employment for hard-to-place individuals. For those who lack work experience, they provide an opportunity to build an employment track record. It is expected that transitional jobs will lead to unsubsidized employment.

Transitional and subsidized employment strategies have been used in several research and demonstration projects dealing with recipients of public assistance (e.g., National Supported Work Demonstration, AFDC Home Health Aid demonstration) and ex-offenders (Center for Economic Opportunities, the Transitional Work Corporation, Transitional Jobs Reentry Demonstration). The research to date finds that those who participate in transitional jobs gain employment more quickly than their counterparts who pursue more traditional job search activities, but that these differences fade over time and by the end of one year, approximately one-third of both groups are employed in the formal labor market. In a similar fashion, randomized trials of transitional jobs with ex-offenders find that they have no consistent impact on recidivism during the first year of follow-up, with approximately one-third of each group getting arrested and returning to prison. One exception to this pattern is the transitional jobs program for high-risk offenders operated by New York City’s Center for Employment Opportunities. A randomized evaluation of that agency’s program found that transitional jobs were associated with reduced recidivism rates among high-risk offenders during the first two years of follow-up.

Transitional jobs are the subject of a large-scale, multi-site, multi-year randomized study being conducted by the Department of Labor. Targeted populations include both ex-offenders and NCPs.

The following points should be considered as you explore the feasibility of including a transitional jobs component in your program.

- Possible employers include nonprofit social service organizations, government agencies, and private for-profit and private non-profit employers.
- Other possible employers are struggling small businesses that can benefit from a subsidized workforce.
- Conduct outreach to employers using job developers, media campaigns, events, workshops, and word-of-mouth.
- Remember that transitional jobs are temporary and are meant to help participants find unsubsidized employment. Encourage host employers to hire participants after the subsidy ends.
- If an employer exists that is already providing transitional or subsidized jobs, consider how your program can refer and enroll participants in that existing model.
- Determine if there a local social services organization such as Goodwill Industries that you could approach to develop a transitional jobs program for NCPs.
Keep in mind that there are many different transitional jobs models: some offer 100 percent of wages that are paid for a fixed amount of time; some have flat payments with employers paid $2,000 per participant (for example, Texas and Utah); some have declining reimbursement over varying amounts of time; some pay minimum wage for each hour worked; some pay the prevailing wage for an occupation.

You may need an entity to perform functions associated with being an Employer of Record. This includes payment of wages, withholding and payroll taxes, employer taxes associated with Social Security and Medicare taxes, federal and state taxes that are withheld, and other formal employer functions.

Funding transitional employment programs is challenging. While a number of programs have been funded with federal demonstration funds or foundation grants, some cities and states have funded subsidized employment programs in other ways. Programs may wish to explore the following funding approaches:

1) Accessing flexible block grant funds such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and the Community Services Block Grant;

2) Using state or local funds available through the Second Chance Act or Social Impact Bonds based on averting future corrections-related expenses; and

3) Tapping into public contracting and bidding opportunities in order to generate program revenue. These strategies are discussed in “Innovative City and State Funding Approaches to Supporting Subsidized Employment and Transitional Jobs,” A Joint Paper by the National Transitional Jobs Network at Heartland Alliance and the Center for Law and Social Policy (Clasp) by Chris Warland, Melissa Young, and Elizabeth Lower-Basch, available at http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/Transitional-Jobs-Report_Warland-Young-Lower-Basch.pdf.

Apprenticeships and Career Pathways

Apprenticeship programs offer an opportunity for hard-to-place workers to gain skills, both in the classroom and on the job. For example, the Texas Workforce Commission’s Apprenticeship Training Program is designed to prepare individuals for occupations in skilled trades and crafts and combines structured on-the-job training — supervised by experienced journey workers — with related classroom instruction. Such programs are common in many countries for young people who are interested in learning a skilled trade. They have not been used as frequently in the United States, and are still a novel idea when it comes to hard-to-employ workers. However, the potential is great, since those who complete apprenticeship programs are ready to work in jobs that pay far more than minimum wage and provide greater career growth opportunities. More information on Texas’ Apprenticeship Training Program can be found at http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/apprentice/apprentice.html.

Career Pathways is an approach supported jointly by the U.S. Department of Labor, Department of Education, and Department of Health and Human Services and adopted by states and local agencies to provide educational and employment opportunities to hard-to-serve populations. Career Pathways link education and training, allowing participants to move up to higher levels of education and training in a targeted industry. According to the Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success at the Center for Law and Social Policy, the Career Pathways approach is a framework for weaving together adult education, training, and post-secondary programs and connecting those services to the workforce needs of employers. Career pathways include
multiple entry and exit points, learner-centered instruction and delivery, assessment of skills and needs, supportive services, and quality work experiences: http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications/files/CPToolkit2012_V1R4.pdf.


Retention Services
Program services continue even after a participant finds a job. The case manager should have a plan in place to assist the participant with keeping the job. Often, keeping a job is more challenging than actually finding one with hard-to-serve population. Effective retention services that case managers can provide include:

▶ Staying flexible. Be willing to change course, partnerships, and directions as funding, new partnerships, and strengths and weaknesses of partnerships emerge.

▶ Maintaining strong employer ties. Listen to employers and be responsive to their input. In order to maintain a strong partnership with employers, the program must be willing to address problems with placements.

▶ Providing work supports and related services. Program participants face many barriers to employment, and programs must be able to provide a variety of supports to help participants remain employed following placement. This might include transportation assistance, housing assistance, childcare assistance, and dealing with mental health or substance abuse issues.

▶ Building strong partnerships. Work with agencies that have a strong track record in their service area, and communicate openly and often with them about participants.

▶ Employing good screening and assessment tool. Case managers must thoroughly screen and assess participants’ strengths and weaknesses before seeking a good employer fit for the participant. This will ensure that employees are matched with an appropriate employer and industry.

▶ Providing strong, ongoing case management. Intensive case management services give participants a sense of accountability and support. Having someone to talk with about problems provides a safety net to the participant. Case managers should be prepared to provide support for six to 12 months following job placement. This entails telephone contact as well as referral to relevant supportive services, mentoring and advocacy.

▶ Always maintaining a range of industry or employer placement options. Programs that can provide participants with a wide range of industry choices are more successful in placing and maintaining long-term employment.

More detailed information on effective retention services and the Jobs Initiative funded by The Annie Casey Foundation can be found at “The Road to Good Employment Retention: Three Successful Programs from the Jobs Initiative,” http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED485908.pdf.
**Child Support Services**

The child support agency can provide a wide variety of services, perform much-needed action on child support cases and offer some incentives to support noncustodial parents in their job search and placement activities. By taking away some of the punitive measures long-associated with child support enforcement and providing supportive services to noncustodial parents in the program, the agency can begin to develop a new relationship of support and assistance.

The following issues should be considered when designing child support incentives and services in a collaborative workforce program.

- Identify existing services offered by child support
- Explore new services or strategies the agency can develop and offer to program participants
- Develop or enhance existing incentives to encourage program participation, employment, and payment

### Child Support Incentives and Enhanced Services

**Dedicated Child Support Worker**

Having a dedicated child support worker at the agency to handle needed case actions quickly is beneficial to program operations. Often, after a review of their child support case, noncustodial parents need a modification to their child support order or to have their driver’s license reinstated in order to travel to and from program workshops or work. Having a dedicated child support worker available to get needed child support case actions taken in an expedited manner removes barriers for the noncustodial parent to fully participate in the program.

**Case-Specific Explanations and Case Clean-Up**

The program case manager or a dedicated child support worker should coordinate child support actions with job search and placement activities to support program participation. Many noncustodial parents have misconceptions about child support and do not understand their personal child support situation and/or how the system works. Providing a one-on-one explanation of a participant’s child support case(s), obligations, and options is extremely beneficial. The dedicated child support worker or program case manager should explain the child support enhancements available to program participants.

**Reinstatement of Driver’s License**

Rapid reinstatement of driver’s license for noncustodial parents who have had their driver’s license suspended for non-payment of child support is critical to successful program participation and employment. If possible, options should be explored to have the reinstatement fee waived, reduced, or paid by the child support agency or the workforce program.

**State Debt Forgiveness**

Some states have debt forgiveness policies or have been testing policies to forgive state-owed debt in exchange for program participation and regular payment of child support. Programs can include a debt forgiveness policy as an incentive for program participation, active job search activities, and ultimately employment and regular child support payment. In the Colorado CSPED program, program participation are offered 10 percent forgiveness of state-owed arrears for each month of full payment for a maximum
abatement of 50 percent. In this example, full payment is defined as 90 percent of the monthly current support due. Project case managers will check payment records for project participants six and 12 months after they become employed and make appropriate ledger adjustments. They plan to stop debt forgiveness for NCPs who become noncompliant but allow them to retain the abatements they earned for months when they were compliant.

**Stayed Enforcement**
Case managers in the Colorado CSPED program will “turn off” applicable enforcement remedies for NCPs in the enhanced treatment group during project participation. This is expected to include professional and driver’s license suspension and bank and financial institution data matches and attachments. They will use project funds to pay the $95 fee for driver’s license reinstatement and make direct payments to Division of Motor Vehicles. They will reinstate enforcement remedies for NCPs who become noncompliant with CSPED program requirements.

**Expedited Modification**
Case managers are encouraged to check child support order levels for participants to ensure that they are realistic and reflect an ability to pay. In the Colorado CSPED, they will be proactive about review and adjustment, and initiate reviews 30 days after a participant becomes employed or changes employment. Child support agencies will consider actual wages in calculating new orders and in modification actions that might result in the generation of minimum orders if the NCP is unemployed. To expedite the review and adjustment process, they will attempt to use the negotiation process and avoid court hearings. They will also explore whether parties will agree to deviate from guidelines and pursue a review and adjustment if an income change falls under the 10 percent threshold.

**Establishing Minimum Orders**
Generating a right-sized order may involve attempting to get parties to stipulate to a minimum order during unemployment. In the Colorado CSPED project, this is a $50-per-month order. Minimum order levels are specified in state guidelines.

**Resources**
See Colorado’s plan on Responsive Child Support Activities for Colorado’s CSPED Program for an example of the steps child support agencies may take to enhance the child support/workforce collaboration:
RESPONSIVE CHILD SUPPORT ACTIVITIES FOR COLORADO’S CSPED PROGRAM

1) Arrears Compromise
   Offer up to 50 percent arrears forgiveness to participating NCPs based upon the following:
   ● As an incentive for working
   ● Offer 10 percent reduction for one month payment in full after employed
   ● If make five full payments in a six month period, they can reach the maximum benefit. If only two payments in six months, only 20 percent will be forgiven (for example)

2) Streamlined Review and Adjustment
   Conduct a proactive review by CSE to determine if a modification is necessary. Case manager will need to review if current order is at an appropriate level for the unemployed or underemployed NCP
   ● Place CSPED participants into a priority group when referring to the modification team
   ● Early Intervention outreach to both parents to engage them in the process
   ● Encourage stipulations by conducting a negotiation conference and use of mediators, if necessary

3) Initial prevention of certain enforcement remedies
   For NCPs actively participating, take automated enforcement remedies off-line:
   ● Professional and occupational license, driver’s license, recreational license suspension programs as well as the financial institution data match remedies are suppressed by the child support worker, and or lifted if already in effect (except recreational licenses, as they may be in the year-long suspension)
   ● Consider using grant dollars to reinstate the driver’s license if it is already suspended. This can be an incentive; the cost is $95 to lift a suspended license
   ● IRS and state tax refunds and passport denials will not be addressed. Should a passport denial occur, consideration of not pursuing if NCP needs passport for employment
The Role of the Court

The role of the court in workforce-child support collaboration differs depending upon whether your child support program is heavily judicial, administrative, or a mixture of the two. Regardless of the structure of your system, it is important to get the court’s buy-in and include court representatives in the planning and decision-making process. This section of the toolkit provides an overview of the varying roles the court can play in a workforce-child support collaboration. It also provides examples of new and innovative ways the court can support unemployed noncustodial parents who enroll in workforce programs such as the problem-solving and fathering courts. Primary issues to consider when involving the court include:

► Determining the level of involvement the court is legally able and willing to take in a workforce program

► Identifying the specific actions the court will take, such as mandating unemployed noncustodial parents to enroll, setting minimum orders and/or suspending enforcement actions during project participation, scheduling and conducting review hearings to monitor participation, applying incentives to encourage efforts to become employed and pay support, and applying sanctions for non-participation (including incarceration)

► Discussing how program staff will communicate with the court, especially if the court conducts review hearings and applies appropriate incentives and sanctions. A web-based enrollment and referral system will help to streamline communication among partner agencies and the court and allows the court, attorneys, and child support workers to get up-to-date information on the participation status of noncustodial parents in the program.

The court can play a key role both in recruitment and referral as well as participation. Below are common actions the court can take to make the program more effective.

Review Hearings

Review hearings scheduled every 30, 60, and 90 days following program enrollment encourage noncustodial parents to participate in job-seeking activities and other program workshops and meetings. They are attended by the NCP and the case manager or another program representative who knows the facts about the parent’s participation. Frequent review hearings allow the court to take swift action in cases where the NCP fails to uphold his “end of the bargain.” Review hearings are integral to programs such as Texas’s NCP Choices, which uses incarceration as a sanction for non-participation.

Mandatory Versus Voluntary Participation

A proven recruitment and enrollment strategy is to have the court mandate that non-paying, unemployed NCPs participate in a workforce program or face an immediate sanction. Programs with mandatory referral strategies typically have staff based at the court who can conduct on-the-spot intake and enrollment procedures. Alternatively, judges can “strongly encourage” non-paying parents to enroll. For example, Colorado’s Parents to Work Program enjoyed the support of judges who “strongly encouraged” non-paying obligors to enroll. Once enrolled, parents who failed to participate in job-seeking activities, find employment,
and make their regular child support payments were subject to ankle monitoring after many months of non-payment.

**Court Incentives and Sanctions**
Depending upon local rules and regulations, courts have a variety of incentives and sanctions to use to encourage non-paying, unemployed obligors to participate in workforce programs. For example, judges in Hampden County, Massachusetts, were willing to impose minimum orders of $80 per month for non-paying NCPs who agreed to participate in a program operated by the local child support and workforce agency. Those who refused to enroll, on the other hand, were more apt to receive a higher child support order that was keyed to the minimum wage. The judges assumed that a parent who refused to participate in a workforce program was probably working in the informal economy and could be assumed to be earning the minimum wage.

**Deferring Enforcement**
Like the child support actions taken administratively on cases, the court has the ability to defer judicial actions for non-paying obligors while participating in a workforce program. This can include delaying contempt actions, avoiding possible jail time and using “reset” dates or scheduling review hearings to monitor compliance with program participation. Frequent review hearings allow the court to determine if a noncustodial parent becomes noncompliant and the speedy reinstatement of enforcement remedies.

**Problem-Solving Courts and/or Fathering Courts**
Specialty child support courts, often called problem-solving courts and fathering courts, are relatively new court-based programs that were first created in 1998. They are designed to engage delinquent, noncustodial fathers and strengthen their ability to be a positive role model in their children’s lives. The court collaborates with a wide array of community stakeholders to identify and address barriers to parenting, employment and child support payment among its delinquent caseload. Problem-solving courts go beyond the imposition of enforcement remedies and try to resolve the underlying causes of nonpayment. These courts closely monitor the fathers’ progress and communicate with fathers about their achievements and problems. They are most successful when they bring together a committed judge, prosecutor, and child support enforcement team.

**Tip:** Conduct frequent review hearings to monitor NCP participation in the workforce program. Review hearings increase program participation, even when participation is not mandated by the court.

**Resources**

National Center for State Courts
http://www.ncsconline.org

Center for Court Innovation
http://www.courtinnovation.org

Information on the Fathering Court
Additional Support Services

It is critical to provide support services to low-income participants in workforce programs. Transportation to and from meetings and appointments is a significant barrier for a majority of low-income NCPs. Addressing this obstacle and providing transportation assistance in the form of bus passes, vouchers, or gas cards, will increase program participation and NCP success. In addition to providing transportation assistance, planners should explore other supportive services that can be offered. This section of the toolkit explores transportation assistance options and other supportive services that may be available in your site.

- Identify potential sources of bus tokens, passes, and partnerships with local transit authorities.
- Brainstorm potential supportive services available in your site that your program can leverage and/or “piggyback” on and/or offer to participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation Assistance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Gas cards and vouchers for those who are insured and have a valid license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Bus tokens and/or daily bus pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Check with your local transit authority for possible discounts and streamlined purchasing and payment arrangements. For example, in Nashville, the Parent Support Program worked with the Metro Transit Authority (MTA) to provide bus passes to participants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Benefits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Referral to local agencies other community-based organizations for possible enrollment in public benefit and work support programs such as food assistance (SNAP), public assistance (TANF), disability benefits (SSI, SSDI), food banks, housing assistance, and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) filing. There are many local non-profit organizations that provide assistance with benefit enrollment and help accessing local community resources. Goodwill Industries in many states provides access to supportive services or help locating resources in the community. In Nashville, the Second Harvest Food Bank is a community resource for food. Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites are available nationwide and provide free tax preparation, including EITC filing for low-income individuals who qualify. In Tennessee, find a site by going to <a href="http://www.unitedwaynashville.org/community-work/financialstability/c/nashville-alliance-for-financial-independence/">http://www.unitedwaynashville.org/community-work/financialstability/c/nashville-alliance-for-financial-independence/</a></td>
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<tr>
<th>Health Care</th>
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<tr>
<td>- With the Affordable Care Act, individuals can now receive health insurance through the Federal government health insurance exchange. Providing access or referrals to navigators who can help participants with enrollment in relevant benefit programs, including health coverage, is a service that may be available in the community. Some states operate their own health insurance exchange. Individuals in states that lack an exchange should explore coverage options and pursue enrollment in the federal exchange at <a href="https://www.healthcare.gov/">https://www.healthcare.gov/</a>. TennCare is the State of Tennessee’s Medicaid program that provides health care for 1.2 million Tennesseans, primarily low-income children, pregnant women, parents of minor children, and people who are elderly or disabled.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Other Supportive Services

- **Criminal record expungement and rap sheet scrubbing:** Some community agencies assist ex-offenders with criminal record expungement and correction of errors on criminal records. In the Nashville area, Goodwill Industries provides this service.

- **Drug testing:** Some community agencies provide drug testing and connect project participants with relevant community services. In the Nashville area, this service is provided by the Criminal Court clerk. Drug testing services also help NCPs to become familiar with common employer practices.

- **Financial literacy classes:** Assets for Independence (AFI) grantees are community-based organizations that provide financial education and savings services to low-income individuals and families. AFI grantees help to build financial capacity through financial education and the promotion of savings activity through the use of matched savings accounts called Individual Development Accounts (IDAs). [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/afi](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/programs/afi), The RISE Foundation is an AFI grantee that provides financial literacy and IDA’s in Shelby County and Memphis, Tennessee.

- **Work clothing:** Local Goodwill agencies or other thrift stores often provide reduced or free work clothing for members of workforce programs. For example in Chattanooga, the Parent Support Program worked with the local Goodwill to provide one free set of work clothes to each program participant.

- **GED tuition assistance:** Local community colleges and technical centers may offer free GED preparation classes.

- **Other services:** Check with your local TANF workforce services provider to determine what types of supportive services they provide to TANF recipients who participate in workforce programs. Try to obtain a parallel set of services and benefits for NCPs in workforce programs for child support populations.

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**Tip:** **Case managers should cultivate relationships with key community partners and refer participants to them for services aimed at addressing barriers to employment and regular payment of child support.**

Methods to use in screening and referring participants to other supportive services include:

- Screening for barriers during the initial intake interview and during subsequent case management meetings;

- Assessing whether these situations require third-party attention and prioritizing those that are most critical to address;

- Identifying local service providers that are equipped to assist project participants in key areas such as food, housing, health care, and financial support;

- Developing relationships with selected service partners and attempting to engage them as supportive program partners;
including key service partners in a project kick-off meeting or other informational session about the program;

- Attempting to establish participants as priorities for service treatment so that they may receive faster or more customized service than is normally the case;

- Making appropriate service referrals, giving the participant full contact information for the referred entity and explicit directions on how to access and obtain needed services;

- Following up on service referrals and determining whether the participant followed through with service recommendations and the outcome;

- Attempting to understand why project participants fail to follow through with service referrals;

- Obtaining feedback from participants on the quality of service referrals;

- Providing a limited number of useful and effective referrals and not overwhelming the participant.

The following is an example of how to systematically assess project participants in key areas pertaining to self-sufficiency and determine whether additional supportive services are warranted. The following self-sufficiency matrix is being used with noncustodial parents in the enhanced services group by the CSPED case manager in Jefferson County, Colorado, as part of Colorado’s CSPED project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Crisis</th>
<th>Vulnerable</th>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Stable</th>
<th>Thriving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Homeless or threatened with eviction</td>
<td>In transition, temporary or substandard housing; and/or current rent/mortgage payment is unaffordable (over 30% of income)</td>
<td>In stable housing that is safe but only marginally adequate</td>
<td>Household is in safe, adequate subsidized housing</td>
<td>Household is safe, adequate, unsubsidized housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Skills</td>
<td>Unable to meet basic needs such as hygiene, food, activities of daily living</td>
<td>Can meet a few but not all needs of daily living without assistance</td>
<td>Can meet most but not all daily living needs without assistance</td>
<td>Able to meet all basic needs of daily living without assistance</td>
<td>Able to provide beyond basic needs of daily living for self and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>No access to transportation, public or private; may have car that is broken</td>
<td>Transportation is available (including bus), but unreliable, unpredictable, unaffordable; may have care but no insurance, license, etc</td>
<td>Transportation is available (including bus) and reliable, but limited and/or inconvenient; drivers are licensed and minimally insured</td>
<td>Transportation (including bus) is generally accessible to meet basic travel needs</td>
<td>Personal transportation is always available and affordable; car is adequately insured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Relations</td>
<td>Lack of necessary support from family or friends; abuse is present or there is child neglect.</td>
<td>Family/friends may be supportive, but lack ability or resources to help; family members do not relate well with one another; potential for abuse or neglect</td>
<td>Some support from family/friends; family members acknowledge and seek to change negative behaviors; learning to communicate and support</td>
<td>Strong support from family or friends. Household members support each other’s efforts</td>
<td>Has healthy/expanding support network; household is stable and communication is consistently open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Skills</td>
<td>Parenting skills are lacking and there is no extended family support</td>
<td>Parenting skills are minimal and there is limited extended family support</td>
<td>Parenting skills are apparent but not adequate</td>
<td>Parenting skills are adequate</td>
<td>Parenting skills are well developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain</td>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Stable</td>
<td>Thriving</td>
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<td>--------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td>No income</td>
<td>Inadequate income and/or spontaneous or inappropriate spending</td>
<td>Can meet basic needs with subsidy; appropriate spending</td>
<td>Can meet basic needs and manage debt without assistance</td>
<td>Income is sufficient, well managed; has discretionary income and is able to save</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victim of Domestic Violence</strong></td>
<td>Victim of repeated or life threatening violence, to self or children. Verbal threats of killing or seriously injuring. Weapons used. Intense stalking or harassment. Frequent calls to police. Threat of the safety of others is used control or manipulate.</td>
<td>Incidents of serious physical/emotional violence that have increased in danger level. History of domestic abuse in previous relationships. Financial control maintained by abuser. Isolation from family and friends by abuser. Excessive jealousy/possessiveness by abuser. You or your children are frightened by your abuser.</td>
<td>Occasional intense arguments/disagreements. No physical threats of violence. Children are not drawn into incidents. Abuser is in treatment to address abusive behavior.</td>
<td>Positive support from friends, family and community. Able to manage strained relationships. You have addressed your own healing through counseling or other means. Child/parent relationship is nurturing, protective and stable.</td>
<td>No threats of violence, no history of abuse or have completely healed from past incidents. All relationships are healthy and supportive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Support Case</strong></td>
<td>Order in place, large arrears and inconsistent support.</td>
<td>Order in place, manageable arrears, and inconsistent support</td>
<td>Order in place, large arrears and consistent support</td>
<td>Order in place, manageable arrears and consistent support</td>
<td>Order in place, no arrears, consistent support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
<td>No job</td>
<td>Temporary, part-time or seasonal; inadequate pay, no benefits</td>
<td>Employed full time; inadequate pay; few or no benefits</td>
<td>Employed full time with adequate pay and benefits</td>
<td>Maintains permanent employment with adequate income and benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Access to Services</strong></td>
<td>is unaware of resources or services that he/she may need or needs help to identify his/her need. Is unable to articulate needs.</td>
<td>Can not locate services to meet needs.</td>
<td>Has a limited number of barriers that discourage access to services or service alternatives.</td>
<td>Receiving needed services but access barriers may limit choice of providers, geography, times of service or other quality related aspects.</td>
<td>No longer in crisis, no longer needs services or is receiving a full range of services to meet needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources

All states provide an array of public benefits and work support services. You can check to see what public benefits are available in each state by going to www.benefits.gov

In Tennessee, public benefits include:

- Families First for public assistance benefits, http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/Office_locator.html
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the Federal Food Stamp program administered by the Department of Human Services in Tennessee, http://tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/afs_fsp.html
- TennCare is the benefit program that provides health insurance to those eligible for Medicaid and some others who lack access to insurance. http://www.state.tn.us/tenncare
- Under the Affordable Care Act, all U.S. citizens are now able to receive health coverage. Individuals may learn more and sign up at https://www.healthcare.gov/
Fatherhood Services

Fatherhood Programs and Curricula

During the past 20 years, responsible fatherhood has emerged as a way to help address the child support, employment, and parenting needs of low-income fathers. Responsible fatherhood programs exist at the local, state, and national level, and fatherhood services are offered in many settings. Although it is widely acknowledged that men need effective programming that is tailored to them, the field struggles with funding and tends to rely on a limited number of federal funding sources.

The first federal fatherhood demonstration project, Parents’ Fair Share, used peer support groups as part of its efforts to offer employment and training programs for noncustodial parents. In subsequent fatherhood demonstration projects, such as the OCSE Responsible Fatherhood Demonstration Projects, noncustodial parents were offered both peer support and fatherhood classes using a structured curriculum aimed at reinforcing the programs’ goals to strengthen fathers as economic providers and as nurturers.

Research conducted in connection with the Texas NCP Choices program shows that noncustodial parents who participate in fatherhood classes in conjunction with a variety of workforce activities pay more child support than do their counterparts who only pursue employment-focused job activities. According to the researchers, it appears to stimulate attitudinal changes that lead to fathers’ increased commitment to paying child support. As a result, fatherhood programming in a peer support format is a core component of the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED), the large-scale, randomized employment project funded by OCSE in October 2012 that is being conducted in eight states.

The following are steps that programs should take in developing an effective fatherhood component:

- Consider partnering with a local, experienced, responsible fatherhood program for delivery of fatherhood programming. Look for programs that have worked with low-income NCPs and understand the issues and constraints that they face. Alternatively, programs may retain an individual staff member with strong communication skills who is experienced in group facilitation and has worked with the population being served.

- Select a fatherhood curriculum that has been used with low-income NCPs and covers key topics. In its instructions to CSPED sites, OCSE recommends that the fatherhood curriculum cover personal development, responsible fatherhood including understanding the child support system, parenting skills including stages of child development, communication skills including conflict resolution and anger management, and domestic violence including health relationships.

- Coordinate fatherhood classes with the delivery of other employment services so that they are convenient and appealing. Since transportation is challenging for low-income NCPs, CSPED sites are being encouraged to offer fatherhood classes where other core services for the project will be provided such as case management, child support procedures, and employment services. Combining fatherhood with employment-oriented services may increase enrollment in both.

- Determine what dosage is practical. Some fatherhood curricula require 12 and 13 sessions that each take 90 minutes to two hours. The fatherhood program offered by the Texas NCP Choices program was a four-hour program. Program architects should be prepared to modify standard curricula so that the timing and format of the course matches what is practically feasible to accomplish with NCPs who are
engaged in job-focused employment activities. The CSPED site in Colorado developed a modified version of the Nurturing Father’s program that involves eight sessions rather than the usual thirteen.

- Include opportunities for peer support. Opportunities for discussion, interaction, and engagement are often the aspects of fatherhood programming that are most appreciated by participants. Some fatherhood curricula include peer support components, others encourage peer support as a portion of each class session, still other programs continue to offer peer support sessions after the formal curriculum is completed.

- Consider using incentives to promote attendance, participation, and retention. Food is commonly used as an incentive in fatherhood courses. Other typical incentives are transportation assistance and small monetary incentives such as gift cards.

- Consider offering a graduation ceremony or event. For many program participants, completing a fatherhood course is one of the few “educational” accomplishments they experience. Graduation events typically involve family members and are heartwarming occasions.

- Monitor attendance and program effectiveness. Some curricula have pre/post-tests that participants take that enable you to assess whether the curriculum is being taught and having an impact. Attendance records are the only way to monitor dosage and assess whether outcomes vary based on exposure to classes and peer support sessions.

Examples of Fatherhood Curricula

**TITLE:** The Parent Employment, Education, and Responsibility Workshops (PEER)  
**SOURCE/AUTHOR:** Texas Office of the Attorney General/Pam Wilson  
**DESCRIPTION:** PEER is a curriculum developed by the Texas Office of the Attorney General to be used in its employment program for low-income NCPs called NCP Choices. The curriculum is designed to provide information and tools that help NCPs understand and fulfill their responsibilities and obligations as parents; present examples of people who come from similar backgrounds and circumstances who have achieved the goals of going to work, paying child support, and strengthening relationships with their children; and show support and confidence in participants’ abilities to change behavior and achieve goals.  
**FORMAT:** The curriculum can be delivered in eight weekly sessions of two hours each.  
**AUDIENCE:** NCPs who are behind on child support.

**TITLE:** The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum  
**SOURCE/AUTHOR:** MDRC/Eileen Hayes  
**LINKS:** [http://www.mdrc.org/responsible-fatherhood-curriculum](http://www.mdrc.org/responsible-fatherhood-curriculum)  
**DESCRIPTION:** The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum is intended to assist fathers in more effectively fulfilling their roles as parents, partners, and workers. It was developed over a number of years’ use in the peer support groups that were the “glue” of the Parents’ Fair Share Demonstration for low-income noncustodial fathers conducted in the 1990s. Through 20 group discussion sessions, the curriculum is a guide to working with fathers by providing support, information, and motivation in the areas of life skills, parenthood, relationships, health and sexuality, and responsible fatherhood. The curriculum also provides a methodology for training and assessment tools.  
**FORMAT:** The curriculum may be presented in 20 weekly sessions.  
**AUDIENCE:** Fatherhood programs interested in targeting and reaching fathers from diverse backgrounds.
TITLE: The Nurturing Father’s Program  
SOURCE/AUTHOR: Center for Growth and Development, Inc./Mark Perlman  
DESCRIPTION: The Nurturing Father’s Program is a 13-week, group-based curriculum for developing attitudes and skills for male nurturance. It addresses the roots of fathering, nurturing children and ourselves, fathering sons and daughters, discipline without violence, play, managing anger and resolving conflict, teamwork with a spouse or partner, communication and problem solving, balancing work and fathering, cultural influences, dealing with feelings, and becoming the father you choose to be. Evaluations of the program have shown it to be successful in increasing key parental attitudes, suggesting that participants improved in their understanding of the developmental capabilities of children, improved in ability to demonstrate empathy toward the needs of children, improved in the reported use of alternate strategies to corporal punishment, increased understanding and acceptance of the needs of self and children, and increased in the value placed on children feeling empowered. Colorado, one of the CSPED project sites, will use an eight-session adaptation of the Nurturing Father’s Program. A session on the child support program and managing finances will be added to the traditional curriculum. In addition, participants will be invited to participate in at least three peer group sessions to network and discuss individual concerns.  
FORMAT: A 13-week program and an eight-week adaptation.  
AUDIENCE: The 13-week program is offered to a wide range of fatherhood programs that serve fathers from diverse background. The eight week adaptation will be offered to unemployed and underemployed fathers in the child support system in Colorado.

TITLE: 24/7 Dad and 7 Habits of A 24/7 Dad™  
AUTHOR: National Fatherhood Institute  
DESCRIPTION: A comprehensive fatherhood program consisting of 12 two-hour sessions with innovative tools, strategies, and exercises for fathers of all races, religions, cultures, and backgrounds. It can be implemented in a group setting or in a one-on-one home-based program. It focuses on key fathering characteristics like masculinity, discipline, work-family balance, and parenting skills. Topics include what it means to be a man, discipline, communication, working with mom and co-parenting, and showing and handling feelings. It is available in Spanish and English. The 7 Habits of A 24/7 Dad™ is an eight-hour workshop that combines the fundamental fathering principles from National Fatherhood Initiative’s 24/7 Dad™ programs with FranklinCovey®’s 7 habits. Evaluations of 24/7 Dad® on knowledge and attitudes related to the five characteristics of the 24/7 Dad—self-awareness, caring for self, fathering skills, parenting skills, and relationship skills—that form the foundation of the program, show that the program significantly improved (statistically) knowledge and/or attitudes in each of the five characteristics.  
FORMAT: A 12 week two-hour program and a variation consisting of an eight hour workshop  
AUDIENCE: Used with a wide range of fathers, including noncustodial fathers, teens, new fathers, fathers of preschool and school-aged children, working fathers, Spanish-speaking fathers, incarcerated fathers, military fathers, and Christian fathers.
Resources
The following is a list of resources on selecting and using a Fatherhood Curriculum that was developed by Elaine Sorensen, Technical Assistance Coordinator for Office of Child Support Enforcement for CSPED Grantees on January 18, 2013.

**Selecting a Fatherhood Curriculum**


**Implementing a Fatherhood Curriculum**


**Staffing**

1) Staff Selection: What’s Important for Fatherhood Programs? 2009
2) Staff Coaching: What’s Important for Fatherhood Programs? 2009
3) Training Program Staff: Five Tips for Fatherhood Programs. 2008

All are available at http://www.fatherhood.gov/for-programs/getting-started/program-development.
Co-Parenting Services

Rationale for Addressing Parenting Time

Many parents in the child support system lack a routine and accessible mechanism to establish parenting time agreements. The problem is most severe for parents of children born out of wedlock, which comprise a growing proportion of the child support caseload. While divorce decrees address custody and visitation issues as well as financial ones such as child support, never-married parents typically receive child support orders that do not simultaneously address parenting time. As a result, unwed parents with child support orders in most states must pursue a separate legal action, often in a different court, and pay a substantial filing fee to receive parenting time with their children. Follow this link to OCSE’s Child Support Fact Sheet Number 13: Child Support and Parenting Time: Improving Coordination to Benefit Children, http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/resource/child-support-and-parenting-time-improving-coordination-to-benefit.

There are many benefits to addressing parenting time issues for noncustodial parents in the child support system.

- It shows NCPs that society values the relational side of fatherhood and not just the economic ones
- It reduces the need for parents to be involved in multiple administrative or judicial processes
- A structured, formal approach to parenting time can help both parents manage their co-parenting relationship and reduce conflict, ambiguity, unpredictability, and uncertainty about parenting time arrangements
- Establishing parenting time and addressing parenting time problems increases parent-child contact and child support compliance
- Children benefit when they have safe, positive, consistent contact with both parents

Addressing parenting time is controversial. While most noncustodial parents are not violent or abusive, safety is an important consideration in any intervention dealing with parenting time.

- Research shows that intimate partner violence (IPV) is particularly high for low-income populations, many of whom are likely to be among the unmarried parents served by the child support agency
- Research shows that there are many forms of family violence, and recognizing the characteristics or patterns in critical to formulating safe and workable parenting time opportunities for children
- Couples who have experienced IPV require individualistic approaches to developing safe parenting plans
- Every approach to developing parenting plans and addressing parenting time problems has strengths and limitations and risks for IPV
- Activities that support access and visitation should incorporate domestic violence safeguards

Methods of Addressing Parenting Time

Only a handful of jurisdictions have mechanisms to incorporate parenting time agreements into initial child support orders routinely and/or to address parenting time problems that develop over time. Most are small-scale rather than large, statewide initiatives. The following are the main approaches that jurisdictions have adopted to address parenting time.
**Standard Parenting Time Schedules.** Standard visitation schedules are established by state statute or court rule. They spell out how the child’s time will be divided between each parent during regular, vacation, and holiday time periods. They are used automatically in the absence of an alternative plan developed by the parents or the court. They can be used with a very large number of families with virtually no cost or delay and do not require parents to pursue a separate legal action or pay a filing fee. The main drawback is that they are perceived to be a one-size-fits-all approach. Jurisdictions that use standard parenting time schedules attempt to inform parents about IPV at multiple points of application and case processing, and encourage parents to disclose safety concerns whereupon they are scheduled for a court hearing where they can request a safety-focused parenting plan or that parenting time be denied.

**Self-Help Resources.** Online parenting plans can be downloaded, completed, and filed with the court along with required legal forms. Telephone hotlines offer callers with visitation problems information and guidance in a general, anonymous fashion. Self-help resources have the potential to serve large numbers of parents with minimal cost and delay, and can generate more customized parenting time plans and solutions to problems. One main drawback is that parents must access these resources on their own, and few know about them and actually do. Another drawback to self-help resources is that they can be complex and the actions that parents must take on their own often require sophistication and skill. Jurisdictions that use self-help resources also rely on parents to select suitable resources, interventions, and plans that have heightened attention to safety. Oregon has basic parenting plan guide to developing a parenting plan, sample worksheets, and plans that vary from basic to more complex, and are located at: http://courts.oregon.gov/OJD/OSCA/cpsd/courtimprovement/familylaw/Parentingplanbasic.page.

Tennessee provides sample online, fill-in-the-blank parenting plans in both English and Spanish that parents can download and use: http://www.tsc.state.tn.us/programs/parenting-plan/forms.

**Mediation and Facilitation.** Some jurisdictions offer neutral, third-party assistance to help parents in the child support program create parenting plans. These facilitators and mediators can be based at the court, the child support agency, a community-based organization, or a private practice. Mediated or facilitated plans are customized to each family’s situation and are better understood by parents because they are explained upfront. Most parents who attempt mediation/facilitation are successful in producing a parenting plan and research finds that plans developed this way leads to more parent-child contact and increased rates of child support payment. The approach can be costly and time consuming. It also requires that staff engage in the challenging process of identifying parents who want and need parenting time help. Once identified, many parents do not follow through or refuse to participate in mediation or facilitation sessions. Existing court and community-based mediation programs are typically oversubscribed, underfunded, and unable to serve a large new population without additional resources. To address IPV, mediators and facilitators actively screen for safety and IPV in every case and are attentive to safety in their interventions with parents and the parenting plans that they develop.

Programs that seek to help parents to establish parenting time plans and address problems dealing with access and visitation should explore the availability and feasibility of collaborating with court and community-based organizations and programs that deal with these issues. They include:

**Access and Visitation Grant Programs.** In 1997, OCSE initiated the State Child Access and Visitation (AV Grant Programs), which involve annual awards of $10 million to states and territories to help support...
programs that further NCPs' access to and visitation with their children. Using federal funds that range from $100,000 to nearly $1 million, states have implemented a variety of programs to help parents with access and visitation that include programs offering parent education, mediation, supervised visitation, parenting plan development, and counseling. The AV program is estimated to serve over 85,000 individuals who tend to be poor, non-white, and never married.

(http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/css/grants/access-visitaton)

- **Court-Based Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution Programs.** Conciliation courts and court-based mediation grew out of court-based marriage counseling efforts begun in the 1960s that focused on reconciliations between husbands and wives. They have since evolved into court-connected counseling and dispute resolution services to help families with divorce, mediation, and the resolution of high-conflict disputes and violent behavior. By mid-2008, the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts, the interdisciplinary professional association for conciliation courts, judges, attorneys, practitioners, and researchers that deals with mediation and family dispute resolution had a membership of over 4,200 in 19 countries. (http://www.afccnet.org/).

- **Family Law Facilitator Programs.** Some states have family law facilitators to help unrepresented parents access the courts. For example, California has a Family Law Facilitator’s Office in every county branch of the Superior Court to help unrepresented parents who have questions about family law issues. Staffed by court attorneys, paralegals, and clerks, family law facilitators are neutral court employees who can help unrepresented parties prepare court forms and provide general legal information. In the area of family law, facilitators deal with custody and parenting, including help with understanding the law, how to make agreements, asking for a custody order, responding to a request, changing or enforcing an order, custody mediation and the impact of domestic violence on custody rights. Family law facilitators also deal with child support matters, including how child support works, how to make agreements between the parents, paying or collecting a child support order, and where to go for additional help.

**Other Co-Parenting Services for Never-Married Families**

Although they are not commonly available, mediation and facilitation are the main services that courts and child support agencies have provided for families in the child support program to develop parenting plans and resolve disputes about parenting time. The following are other services that are sometimes available.

- **Parent Education.** Parent education programs attempt to prevent conflict by focusing on the destructive effects of conflict on children and how parents can help their children transition to a post-separation or post-divorce environment. Operating in 46 states, most parent education programs focus on divorced populations, with many states mandating attendance at parent education prior to obtaining a divorce decree. Some jurisdictions have developed program variations for never-married parents, although attendance is a challenge since parents cannot easily be mandated to attend.

- **Neutral Exchange.** Formal visitation exchange services are offered at convenient locations during peak hours that sandwich the weekend. Parents usually pay a modest drop-off and pick-up fee. The supervisor ensures that the children are exchanged without parental conflict and that relevant clothes, supplies, and other needed equipment travels with the children. Visitation exchange services are usually court ordered or agreed to by the parents in a mediation agreement.

- **Supervised Visitation.** Supervised visitation is ordered by the court when there are allegations of or a history of domestic violence or child abuse or neglect and or a prolonged parental absence, and
unsupervised visits might place the children at risk for harm. The process involves using trained personnel (usually based in a community-based organization) to monitor visits so that it occurs in a safe, neutral environment. An important objective is to normalize visitation for families, encourage compliance with court orders, and promote healthy parent-child relationships. Some challenges are the lack of supervised visitation programs in many geographical areas, the cost of services for families, long wait lists to access services, and the challenge of getting supervised visitation orders reviewed by the court and revised or lifted over time. The Supervised Visitation Network, an international membership association established in 1992, has developed standards for visitation supervisors that address duties and obligations. (http://www.svnetwork.net/)
Domestic Violence Considerations

While most noncustodial parents are not violent or abusive, safety is an important consideration in any program that involves the emotional issues of relationships, children, and money. Research shows that:

- There are many forms of family violence. According to one typology, it ranges from intimate terrorism that involve attempts of total control, to situational couple violence where violence is triggered by situations rather than a desire to control.

- Intimate partner violence (IPV) is particularly high for low-income populations, many of whom are likely to be among the unmarried parents served by the child support agency. The incidence of IPV may be higher for those who report arguments with the father over child support and parenting time.

- Most survivors of IPV feel that it is safe to attempt to collect child support on their behalf, and few want to pursue a good cause waiver of child support enforcement.

- Recognizing the characteristics or patterns of IPV in a particular situation is critical to determining what processes and services would be helpful.

Identifying and Addressing Intimate Partner Violence

Programs attempt to identify and address IPV in a variety of ways. No one way works in every program situation, and no one method of identification is foolproof. The following are some options:

- **Universal Notification and Self-Identification.** One approach to IPV is to try to make parents aware of it and create multiple, safe opportunities for parents to disclose violence. This involves including notices and questions about family violence on online and printed program applications, notices, and other types of literature. Parents should be invited to notify appropriate personnel about any safety concern so that appropriate steps can be taken to help and protect them.

- **Staff Training.** Educating staff about IPV is a key part of creating a program environment that is sensitized to the issue, welcoming of disclosure, and able to generate an effective response. The Texas Office of Attorney General, in partnership with the Texas Council on Family Violence, recently created a four-hour interactive training curriculum on family violence that has been administered to all child support workers.

- **Relationships with Local Domestic Violence Advocates.** Programs are encouraged to develop relationships with local or statewide domestic violence advocacy groups and service providers. These relationships allow for cross-training, assistance with the development of screening tools and program policies, and ongoing consultations. Programs can also refer individuals who disclose IPV problems to local domestic violence programs for relevant services and treatment.

- **Domestic Violence Screening Tools.** Many service providers who work with parents about parenting time actively screen and assess for IPV. Screening tools and methodologies differ ranging from open-ended questions that are asked in a more general interview to a lengthy set of explicit, behavioral questions that are self-administered or administered to a project participant by a staff member. All tools fail to detect some IPV.

The tool on the following page was developed by the Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, with input from the Tennessee Division and Child Support Services for the Tennessee CSPED project.
Collaborating with Local Resources

Many resources are available locally. Check with your statewide domestic violence coalition to locate local domestic violence prevention and supportive services programs.

In Tennessee, the Tennessee Coalition to End Domestic & Sexual Violence (TCDASV) is a private nonprofit organization composed of diverse community leaders and program members who share a common vision of ending violence in the lives of Tennesseans through public policy, advocacy, education, and activities that increase the capacity of programs and communities to address violence. Many resources are available on their website at http://tncoalition.org/.
The TCDASV has a list of local Batterer Intervention Programs available by city; check http://tncoalition.org/#/find-help/certified-bips-programs.html to locate one. The National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) provides lifesaving tools and immediate support to enable victims to find safety and live lives free of abuse. Callers to the toll-free hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) can expect highly trained experienced advocates to offer compassionate support, crisis intervention information, and referral services in over 170 languages. http://www.thehotline.org/help/

The Supervised Visitation Network provides supervised visitation resources and has a searchable database that allows you to search for supervised visitation programs by location: http://www.svnetwork.net/providers_disclaimer.asp.

**Staff Awareness and Training**

The DELTA PREP Toolkit contains guidance and tools to help your organization strengthen its ability to facilitate and lead efforts for primary prevention of intimate partner violence. The information is based upon the activities and experiences of the DELTA PREP (Preparing and Raising Expectations for Prevention) project, which has supported the work of 19 state domestic violence coalitions to build their organizational capacity for primary prevention of IPV (http://vawnet.org/DELTAPREPToolkit/).

The Battered Women's Justice Project offers training, technical assistance, and consultation on the most promising practices of the criminal and civil justice systems in addressing domestic violence. Staff attorneys and advocates can provide information and analyses on effective policing, prosecuting, sentencing, and monitoring of domestic violence offenders. www.bwjp.org

Texas Council on Family Violence staff training curriculum resources can be found at http://www.tcfv.org/bipp-home/bipp-program-resources.

**Resources**

Evaluating Program Outcomes

Building evidence that documents program services and rigorously evaluates outcomes will help to improve the quality of workforce and child support programs and sustain them over time. The agencies that fund and staff the program may require a formal program evaluation to justify their support. Program directors will find that the generation and analysis of information on participants, services, and outcomes will strengthen programs and help them direct limited resources in the most effective manner. The development and publication of evidence-based literature on workforce programs for child support populations will expand their usage, stimulate replications, and generate supportive public policies. Below are some of the steps to take in conducting a program evaluation.

- Contract with an experienced evaluator. Ideally, the evaluator should be involved from the beginning of the program and assist with program design, implementation, and outcome tracking.
- Identify key research questions that you hope to answer from the evaluation.
- Develop an evaluation plan that describes how key research questions will be answered, outcomes will be measured, and needed information will be collected.
- Use the strongest research design possible to generate conclusions that are unambiguous. An experimental design that involves the assignment of comparable noncustodial parents to a regular and enhanced treatment group on a random basis is the “gold standard” in research on program effectiveness. If true random assignment is not feasible, quasi-experimental designs should be explored.
- Document all steps in the process, including recruitment, referral, enrollment, and service receipt.
- Develop mechanisms for recording relevant information on program participants, service delivery, and outcome.
- Record and track all information needed for the program evaluation. Keep in mind that the quality of the evaluation rests on the careful and systematic collection of information, and in the world of evaluation research, “If it’s not documented, it didn’t happen.”

Research Goals and Questions

Deciding what to focus on in the evaluation grows out of decisions about the intervention and the clients who will be served. A process and participation evaluation will consider factors such as:

- Which stakeholders were engaged in program planning? Was anyone left out?
- What obstacles were encountered in developing and implementing a service package including larger economic factors such as the unemployment rate and the availability of entry-level jobs?
- How were decisions reached regarding the population to serve? What was the rationale behind these decisions?
- How were project participants recruited, enrolled, engaged and retained?
- What were the demographic, educational, family, incarceration and employment characteristics of participants?
- What mix of services did the program offer?
How were services organized and delivered? Did participants receive an adequate “dosage” of services? What was the quality of the services that were delivered?

Did the program change over time? What was the reason for the changes and how did the revised program fare?

Outcome evaluations may address questions such as:

- Did the client obtain employment following program participation?
- What earnings and benefits did participants realize through his/her post-program employment?
- How stable was employment following program improvement? How long did he/she spend in a single job? How much job churn and turnover did he/she experience? How much time elapsed between spells of employment?
- Did the amount of child support that was paid increase following program participation? Did the regularity of child support payments improve? Did the incidence of non-payment decline?
- How do post-program payments and arrears balances compare with pre-program patterns?
- Do changes in child support payment patterns appear for most program participants or only specific subgroups, such as those finding employment at higher income levels, those who participated in the program at different levels, or those who had especially good or bad pre-program payment patterns.

No matter what type of evaluation is planned, consideration must be given to practical issues such as:

- Who will use the evaluation and how will they use it?
- What resources (time and money) are available to support the evaluation process?
- How difficult will it be to generate various types of process and outcome data?
- Who will be responsible for data collection?
- How will the data be analyzed, presented, and interpreted?

**Evaluation Design**

A logic model is a tool to guide you through the steps in developing and evaluating a program. It lays out the resources that will be required, how interventions will be structured, and shows the logic between the interventions and the outcomes being measured. The example on the following page shows the logic underlying a Tennessee program for unwed parents that aimed to assist with the development of parenting plans.

The following describes the design of some on-going and recently completed evaluations of workforce-child support programs.

**Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED).** This five-year, multi-site demonstration project funded by OCSE is being evaluated by the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin and Mathematica using a rigorous, experimental design that involves random assignment. NCPs with barriers to employment and child support payment are identified and referred to the CSPED project. Prior to receiving any services, the NCP takes part in a confidential, 30-45 minute telephone interview. Following the interview or baseline assessment, the NCP is randomly assigned by a computer into the experimental or control group. Members of the experimental group receive intensive case management...
and enhanced services available through the project while members of the control group receive regular services offered by the workforce and child support agencies.

**Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration Project (ETJD).** Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and Employment, the Enhanced Transitional Jobs Demonstration (ETJD) Project examines the effectiveness of providing transitional jobs to low-income noncustodial parents and ex-offenders in seven states. The evaluation being conducted by MDRC utilizes a rigorous, random assignment approach to assess changes in participant employment, earnings and child support payments.

http://www.mdrc.org/project/enhanced-transitional-jobs-demonstration#featured_content

Parents to Work! (PTW). Parents To Work, a workforce program conducted in Arapahoe County, Colorado, was evaluated by the Center for Policy Research during 2008-2010. It utilized an experimental design with NCPs being assigned to a control or experimental groups on a random basis according to the last digit of the noncustodial parent’s Social Security Number (SSN). NCPs with SSNs ending in 0 to 3 were assigned to the control group, and NCPs with SSNs ending in 4 to 9 were assigned to the experimental group. Members of the experimental group received enhanced treatments available through the project, while members of the control group received regular services offered by child support and the workforce programs.
Texas NCP Choices. NCP Choices is a workforce program operating in 10 sites in Texas, part of a collaboration between the Texas Office of the Attorney General and the Texas Workforce Commission. The program gives low-income noncustodial parents with children who are recent or current recipients of public assistance and are behind in their child support payment, the opportunity to make their child support payment, receive employment services or go to jail. Both Texas NCP Choices and a New York program, Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers, employed a research design that relied on a statistical technique called propensity score matching to create a comparison group. This approach is not as strong as true random assignment, but it is often employed when random assignment is not feasible. As Schroeder and Doughty explain Propensity score modeling\textsuperscript{14} as:

systematically comparing each experimental group member to all potential comparison group members on a number of characteristics... typically consisting of demographic, economic, program participation and other characteristics. The potential comparator with the closest matching characteristics, known as the ‘nearest neighbor,’ is then selected to be in the comparison group. This process is continued until all members of the experimental group have had their own nearest neighbors chosen.

Parent Support Program of Hampden County, Massachusetts (PSP). The Parent Support Program of Hampden County involved a collaboration between the child support agency (Department of Revenue) and a local workforce program (FutureWorks). The number of un- and underemployed NCPs served by the child support agency was insufficient to generate a comparison group during the same point in time. As a result, program impacts were assessed by comparing the performance of program participants prior to and following their enrollment over a 12 to 24 month period of time. Relevant data items included child support payment performance, employment status, and earnings. Project evaluators also attempted to identify and generate information on payment behavior for a group of “comparable” NCPs served by the child support agency prior to the initiation of the Parent Support Program. To generate a comparison group, workers went back in time to identify cases that had minimum orders established in the year prior to the program startup. These individuals were believed to be parents who would have benefited from workforce services had they been available. The matching process was labor intensive and despite the best attempts to create equivalent groups, there were substantial differences between experimental and comparison group cases.

Tennessee Parent Support Program (PSP). The Tennessee Parent Support Program was conducted in the 11th (Chattanooga), 20th (Nashville) and 26th (Jackson) Judicial Districts. In each setting, child support agencies partnered with local workforce programs to offer job assistance to un- and underemployed noncustodial parents. Due to case volume, court preferences and the rural nature of the 26th Judicial District, it was not feasible to simultaneously generate treatment and comparison groups. A comparison group was generated consisting of noncustodial parents who were believed to be unemployed and/or underemployed in adjacent judicial districts with similar demographic and child support characteristics. One challenging aspect of the research design was the limited amount of information available on NCPs in matched judicial districts since child support workers usually met with custodial parents and only collected data needed for the automated child support information system. As in the Massachusetts PSP, there were substantial differences between

\textsuperscript{14} Schroeder, D, N. Doughty Texas Bib-Custodial Parent Choices: Program Impact Analysis, August 2009.
Experimental and comparison group cases despite the matching efforts. To measure impact of PSP on parents, information on child support payment behavior was collected for 24 months prior to and following program enrollment for members of the treatment group. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with program participants approximately 6-12 months after they enrolled.

**High and Low Level Treatment Groups:** Another program design that might be useful when random assignment is not possible involves comparing alternative interventions. Programs could offer one group of clients written information about job search activities and community services while providing case management and a variety of job services to another group of clients. Comparing the two groups will allow for an exploration of the added value of providing more intensive services. This approach can be helpful when programs do not have sufficient resources to offer intensive services to all clients, but face objections to randomly assigning one group to receive no services at all. If possible, the provision of low and higher levels of services should be offered in a neutral manner (e.g., on certain days of the week or weeks of the month), so that client motivation and self selection factors do not affect group assignment. In addition to assessing outcomes associated with different levels of treatment, evaluators will have to describe the characteristics of members of the two groups and assess their comparability. Tennessee, Texas and Colorado successfully used a design involving the random assignment of parents with parenting problems to high and low-level treatment groups in the evaluation of multi-site demonstration projects dealing with parenting time.

**Tracking Service Delivery and Participation**

It is imperative to collect relevant demographic, employment, child support, and family relationship history to allow you to consider how well the program works with specific types of populations. It is equally important to collect information on the service referrals the client receives and, if possible, the services in which the client participates. Without accurate service information it is impossible to measure dosage and know the degree to which the client actually engaged in the program or whether his/her participation was nominal. There are a variety of methods to utilize in collecting data from program participants: hard-copy paper forms, Access databases, and online cloud-hosted databases. Data can be used to produce monthly, quarterly, and interim reports that provides information on the level of client enrollment, attrition and service delivery. This type of information also allows program architects an opportunity to make interim adjustments in program operations.

**Tracking Outcomes**

Depending upon the program being evaluated, there are a variety of outcome measures that may be of interest. As noted above, the study may focus on:

- Whether the client obtained employment following enrollment in the program
- The income and benefits associated with post-program employment
- The stability of the post-program improvement (such as the amount of time in a single job or the amount of time between spells of employment)
- Whether post-program child support payments show significant increases over pre-program payments
- Whether changes in child support payment patterns are found for most program participants or only specific subgroups, such as those finding employment at higher income levels, or those who had especially good or bad pre-program payment patterns.
Benefits of Evaluating Your Program

- It is often required or recommended by the funding agency
- It sharpens program performance and provides important information on how to improve the program
- It gives you objective feedback on expected and unexpected outcomes
- It helps you decide whether to retain and replicate a program
- It helps you identify and publicize “Best Practices”

Resources

Evaluation is guided by established standards for the evaluation of educational programs supported by the American Evaluation Association. There are many resources on the internet to assist you with designing an effective program evaluation. Below are a few key resources.

- Evaluation Planning Presentation. Al Fournier & Peter Ellsworth, from CALS Extension Faculty Conference, August 16, 2012

Resources for developing a logic model:
