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Quick Facts: Family Centered Child Support Services

This Quick Facts guide provides information about initiatives through the child support program centered on families.

The Child Support Enforcement Program¹ is a successful federal-state-tribal partnership whose mission is to promote economic stability for children whose parents live apart.

Throughout the nation, Child Support Enforcement Programs have recognized the need to focus on services that promote right size orders, reduce arrears, especially those owed to the states, and allow agencies to get involved early when child support orders are not being paid. In order to achieve this focus, several state and county programs have implemented best practices which include working with other agencies and programs such as the Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration which provides support services that are centered on families.

The following outlines these best practices and programs:

- Alternative Solutions – Provide referrals to various organizations that assist noncustodial parents with overcoming barriers that hinder them from becoming self-reliant. Provide referrals to partnered organizations for job training and/or placement services.
- Prisoner/Re-Entry Programs – Assist in educating the incarcerated noncustodial parents about child support modifications as well as lifting license restrictions on participants soon to be released.
- Child Support Noncustodial Parent Employment Demonstration (CSPED) – Services are wrapped around case management, employment, parenting education, financial stability, relationship building, and economic sustainability.
- Access & Visitation Programs – Provide referral sources to parents to establish visitation (parenting) plans.
- Arrears Management Programs – Forgiveness of State Arrears upon meeting specifically outlined requirements.
- Fatherhood Initiatives – Assist the noncustodial parent in removing barriers that prevent the parent from meeting their court ordered child support and increasing their involvement in their child(ren) lives.
- Parenting Time Credit – Provide encouragement of parenting plans to ensure right sized orders and to promote parental involvement.

¹ Title IV, Part D of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 651, *et seq.*)





The new federal rule that took effect in January, 2017, entitled Flexibility, Efficiency, and Modernization in Child Support Enforcement Programs², facilitates many of the family-centered child support services in place at the state and county level. The new rule mandates that child support orders are set based on a parent's income or other evidence of ability to pay, and discourages across-the-board imputation of income absent evidence that supports the order. The new rule also disallows treating incarceration as voluntary unemployment, and encourages agencies to initiate review of orders where parents are incarcerated, to prevent arrears building up during incarceration that end up reducing the ability to pay support upon release. Finally, the new rule requires that the use of civil contempt to enforce collection of child support complies with due process, and is reserved for payers who are able to pay but choose not to, rather than for payers who are truly unable to meet their obligation.

The new rule reflects a move away from the original program mission to recover welfare costs, and away from the use of more traditional, coercive enforcement methods, and places more of an emphasis on family-centered child support services.

² 81 FR 93492

