



## Collaboration with the Workforce Investment Act

**Issue:** The Child Support program and the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) share a common goal of helping families achieve self-sufficiency. However, the WIA has no incentive to prioritize service to unemployed non-custodial parents (NCPs) in the child support program. All individuals, regardless of income or employment status, are eligible for a set of WIA core services, such as basic job search assistance, access to information about job openings, and information about various job training programs. However, many unemployed NCPs require a more comprehensive array of services, such as actual skill training opportunities or on the job training referrals and should be eligible to receive priority assistance from the WIA. The child support program is uniquely positioned to identify these individuals, link them to services and assure that children benefit as their parents improve their capacity to maintain regular employment.

**NCSEA Position:** The Child Support program and the WIA should be required to collaborate so that unemployed noncustodial parents would receive services designed to enhance employability and secure employment, ultimately resulting in the payment of child support.

**Action Needed:**

- (1) Codify a mandated connection between the WIA and child support. Specifically, the WIA should prioritize services to those unemployed NCPs referred by the child support program.
- (2) A child support seat should be required on Workforce Investment Boards, further encouraging the programs to work together. This could be accomplished through regulatory change. (20 CFR part 652 et al.)
- (3) Align performance measurement systems of WIA and child support to allow for unemployed non-custodial parents to receive all WIA services, not just core services. This could be accomplished through regulatory change. (20 CFR part 652 et al.)
- (4) Amend Federal child support regulations to allow incentive funds used for WIA collaboration to receive Federal match.

**Background:** The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) was designed to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants; increase occupational skill

attainment by participants; and, as a result, improve the quality of the workforce; reduce welfare dependency; and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation.

The Child Support program was designed to enhance the well-being of children by obtaining financial support. On the surface, these two federal programs would appear to overlap, given the need for Non-Custodial Parents (NCPs) to support their children financially.

However, WIA's performance measurement system encourages selection of those cases that are most likely to succeed quickly. Many child support clients are considered hard to employ and consequently denied access to WIA services completely. WIA cannot risk losing funding and consequently has no incentive to serve these individuals. WIA's focus on immediate employment conflicts with the need for unemployed NCPs to attain long-term employment in order to make payments. WIA's performance measures should be adjusted to enable unemployed NCPs to receive employment assistance. Better aligned performance measures would help to meet the needs of those most in need, with the added benefit of child support collections increasing.

Lastly, Two-thirds of child support collections come from wage withholding. Wages are derived from employment. With these changes, WIA could potentially assist unemployed NCPs obtain employment and subsequently pay their child support.