

## Quick Facts: Workforce Development

**This Quick Facts guide provides information about program initiatives to help noncustodial parents connect with job training and placement services**

The Child Support Program<sup>1</sup> is a successful federal-state-tribal partnership and a key component in promoting economic stability for families. In an effort to make the program more effective and to increase regular child support payments among cases with noncustodial parents who have limited earnings, child support programs have partnered with a wide variety of workforce development programs to provide job training and employment services to noncustodial parents. These programs are designed to complement traditional enforcement tools and to help noncustodial parents find suitable employment opportunities so they can support their children. They include the following:

- job search assistance;
- job readiness training;
- job development and job placement services;
- skills assessments to facilitate job placement; and
- job retention services; certificate programs, and other skills training directly related to employment.

Traditional enforcement tools often prove ineffective in getting unemployed noncustodial parents to pay child support.<sup>2</sup> Noncustodial parents often face similar barriers to work as custodial parents such as low levels of education, lack of recent work experience, or health conditions that limit their ability to work.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, offering job services is a more effective approach for increasing the ability of unemployed noncustodial parents to get and keep a job and to pay child support on a regular basis. The evidence from recent research studies, including rigorous analyses of Texas' *NCP Choices* and the New York's *Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative*, indicates that child support-coordinated work programs can be an effective method of increasing child support payments to families.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Created by Title IV-D of the Social Security Act

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see Maria Cancian, Daniel R. Meyer, and Eunhee Han's article, *Child Support: Responsible Fatherhood and the Quid Pro Quo* (2011), *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 635:140.

<sup>3</sup> See publication by Elaine Sorensen and Helen Oliver, *Policy Reforms are Needed to Increase Child Support from Poor Fathers* (2002), available at <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/60406/410477-Policy-Reforms-are-Needed-to-Increase-Child-Support-from-Poor-Fathers.PDF>.

<sup>4</sup> For further information, see Daniel Schroeder and Nicholas Doughty's report, *Texas Non-Custodial Parent Choices: Program Impact Analysis* (2009), available at [https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cs/of/ncp\\_choices\\_program\\_impact.pdf](https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cs/of/ncp_choices_program_impact.pdf). Also, Kye Lippold, Austin Nichols, and Elaine Sorensen's report, *Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers: Final Impact Report for the Pilot Employment Programs* (2011), available at: <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/24246/412966-Strengthening-Families-Through-Stronger-Fathers-Initiative-Summary-of-Impact-Findings.PDF>.





In Texas' *NCP Choices* service model, noncompliant NCPs were given the choice of paying child support, participating in workforce services, or going to jail. The program included job readiness and job search assistance as well as training opportunities. The program resulted in a 49 percent gain in collections rate relative to the comparison group. *NCP Choices* participation was also associated with a substantial 15 percentage-point increase in the frequency of any child support collections in the first year after being ordered into the program. Overall, in the first year after the program, *NCP Choices* participants paid approximately \$54 per month more in child support than their comparison group counterparts, a substantial 44 percent increase in total collections. Additionally, those ordered into *NCP Choices* were subsequently employed at much higher rates than were their comparison group counterparts.

New York's *Strengthening Families Through Stronger Fathers Initiative* involved work-oriented programs that offered job search assistance and job readiness training; workshops to help participants understand and navigate the child support system; and classes on parenting, communication, and relationship skills. After taking part in these programs, participants increased their earnings by 22 percent and their child support payments by 38 percent, compared with a comparable group of noncustodial parents who did not receive these services.

States have implemented many different workforce development strategies. To name just a few, North Dakota developed *Parental Responsibility Initiative for the Development of Employment* (PRIDE) which assists noncustodial parents with job search assistance, matching participants with employers, GED referral and assistance with testing fees. The District of Columbia created the *Alternative Solutions Center*, which assists noncustodial parents with employment and barriers to employment such as substance abuse, incarceration, etc. Florida implemented Motion to Enforce, which includes judicial orders for parents to participate in job training programs and conduct work searches. Florida also provides computers in its office lobbies where parents can access job training and placement resources.

As of February 2014, 30 States and the District of Columbia operated 77 work-oriented programs for noncustodial parents with active child support agency involvement, serving roughly 30,000 parents in 2013. Many of these programs are associated with better child support and employment outcomes, and evaluations show they usually lead to increased support payments.

<sup>5</sup>

Despite research evidence and states' recognition of the value of providing employment services for unemployed noncustodial parents, workforce development activities are not allowed as a IV–D reimbursable cost. Allowing for limited federal funding to support Workforce Development programs specifically for unemployed noncustodial parents or providing further guidance to states on what programs exist to assist unemployed noncustodial parents would encourage more evidence-based and cost-effective approaches to obtaining regular child support payments.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Support Enforcement, *Work- Oriented Programs for Noncustodial Parents with Active Child Support Agency Involvement* (2014), available at: [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/work\\_oriented\\_programs\\_for\\_non\\_custodial\\_parents\\_2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/programs/css/work_oriented_programs_for_non_custodial_parents_2014.pdf).

